

# THE MILITANT

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## Republicans prepare attack on Social Security

**Supporters of Socialist Workers 2004 ticket campaign at protests around Republican convention**



Militant/Jenny Johnson-Blanchard

Socialist Workers Party campaigners march in August 29 action in New York, offering a working-class alternative to parties of American capitalism. Socialists campaigned for SWP ticket of Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president. Hawkins is holding banner, at right. (See article on page 5)

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW YORK—As the Republican Party national convention opened at Madison Square Garden here August 30, President George Bush put forward proposals that prepare the way for deeper attacks on Social Security.

Arguing that funds for Social Security will be running out in coming years because of the growing numbers of older workers, Bush promoted the alternative of individual retirement accounts that would supposedly allow working people to build up their savings.

This proposal builds on the ground-work laid by the Clinton administration, which eliminated Aid for Families with Dependent Children through its 1996 welfare “reform” law as the opening wedge of the bipartisan assault on Social Security.

Speaking to audiences around the country in the days leading up to his acceptance speech in New York on September 2, Bush also proposed a health insurance plan based on individual coverage rather than employer-provided plans, which he said workers would be able to keep even if they change jobs.

In addition, the president called for making previous tax cuts permanent.

These measures are being presented as part of promoting what Bush called “the ownership society,” as a source of stability in face of “changing times.”

The first days of the convention featured former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani and California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both Republican politi-

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## Utah miners plan events to mark one year of union fight

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL AND PAT MILLER

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Coal miners at the Co-Op mine here are organizing an event October 2 to mark the one-year anniversary of the start of their 10-month strike for union recognition that concluded six weeks ago. Back on the job, the miners are using this event and other actions to broaden support for their fight to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

“The Co-Op bosses blatantly harass UMWA supporters at the mine,” Bill Es-

**Order back issues of ‘Militant’ to learn about miners’ battle. Free with sub! (see p. 2)**

trada, one of the miners, said at an August 28 meeting of the Utah Jobs with Justice Co-Op Miners Solidarity Committee in Salt Lake City called to build the anniversary event in

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## New York protests target ‘Bush agenda,’ push election of Democrat John Kerry

BY PAUL PEDERSON AND ANGEL LARISCY

NEW YORK—Carrying placards reading “Defend America, Dump Bush,” “Bush Lies, Who Dies?” and signs with the photo of the Republican president and the inscription “Darn Good Liar,” throngs of protesters filled the streets of Midtown

Manhattan August 29.

“Say No to the Bush Agenda,” was the theme of the march, organized to help the campaign of Democratic presidential contender John Kerry. United for Peace and Justice, a coalition that organized large peace demonstrations before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, sponsored the action. Beginning at noon, the march wound slowly to an end around 5:00 p.m. at Union Square

Park, where ushers instructed demonstrators through a loudspeaker to disperse.

Organizers decided to forego a closing rally even though they had obtained a permit for one on the West Side Highway on the southern tip of Manhattan, where refurbished piers by the Hudson River provide adequate facilities for such an event. United for Peace and Justice spokespeople

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## Germany: unions protest cuts to jobless benefits

BY DOUG NELSON

Tens of thousands of people in Germany marched for the fifth Monday in a row August 23 to protest government cuts in unemployment compensation. According to the Deutsche Welle news service, the latest demonstration drew at least 70,000 people from 140 cities, primarily in the east where unemployment is the highest.

The new legislation, known as “Hartz IV,” is the fourth in a series of anti-labor measures initiated by a commission led by Peter Hartz, an advisor to Chancellor Gerard Schröder. The law is scheduled to go into effect January 2005.

The Hartz measures are part of the German government’s course of chipping away at

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Reuters/Tobias Schwarz

Thousands took part in August 16 union-organized march in eastern German city of Leipzig against Berlin’s cuts to unemployment insurance.

## Panama gov’t pardons CIA-trained mass murderers

BY SAM MANUEL

On the eve of the Republican National Convention, Panamanian president Mireya Moscoso, an ally of the White House, pardoned and released four Cuban counterrevolutionaries who had been accused of planning the assassination of Cuban president Fidel Castro during the Ibero-American Summit three years ago. Among them was notorious CIA-trained bomber Luis Posada Carriles.

The Cuban government broke diplomatic relations with Panama August 26 following the action by the outgoing president.

The four men, Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez, Pedro Remón, and Guillermo Novo,

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# Declining wages, rising rents behind housing crisis in D.C.

**BY SAM MANUEL**  
WASHINGTON, D.C.—With rents devouring a large part of workers’ income, overcrowding and homelessness are rising in the metropolitan area here. This is despite a continued rise in construction of houses and apartment dwellings.

Permits issued in the District of Columbia for construction of single-family housing rose 10 percent during the 12-month period ending June 2003, according to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For multifamily apartment dwellings, the figure—2,200 permits—was five times higher than the number issued in the previous 12 months.

The shortage of affordable housing is being fueled by the decline in real wages and benefits, increases in fuel and other costs, and the cyclical rise in property values.

“It’s getting harder and harder to stay here,” Tyrell Bivens, 38, told the *Militant* as he sat outside the Gateway apartment complex with his friend James Henderson, 40. Both men work as laborers in the construction industry. They said work is relatively stable now and they can make as much as \$14 an hour.

Even so, “no matter how much more I make, it never seems to be enough,” Henderson said. He said rents have doubled since he moved into the building in 1995. He now pays \$1,300 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. “It takes me and my wife working just to pay the bills, and I need all the overtime I can get.”

“The hardest thing is not knowing how long this ride will last,” said Bivens, referring to the uncertainty of long-term work in construction.

A report by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), entitled “Can You Afford to Live Here?,” said average monthly rents in the region rose 16.6 percent between 2001 and 2002—from \$992 per month to \$1,157. It placed the average monthly rental cost in the city of Washington, D.C. at \$877.

The report also pointed out that the average wage needed to pay that rent is \$13.33

per hour. A report covering the same year by the National Low Income Coalition estimated that it would take an hourly wage of \$18.13 to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Washington, D.C. It noted that one out of five households in the city earn less than the full-time minimum wage of \$6.15 an hour.

Government and service jobs constitute nearly 81 percent of employment in the city, according to local government figures. There has been an increase in employment in the service sector over the past decade as government cutbacks have resulted in layoffs of public employees. The U.S. Census Bureau’s National Compensation Survey shows that many workers in service jobs earn far less than the \$13.33 an hour that, according to the COG report, is needed to afford a one-bedroom apartment. Cooks earn an average of \$9.45, janitors and cleaners \$9.64, and hotel clerks \$8.38. The average wage for all workers employed in food preparation and serving is \$8.72.

At the same time, the city’s unemployment level, while lower than the 9.2 percent high point in 1999, remains at 7.1 percent, and is higher if the numbers of part-time workers and those who have given up looking for jobs are included.

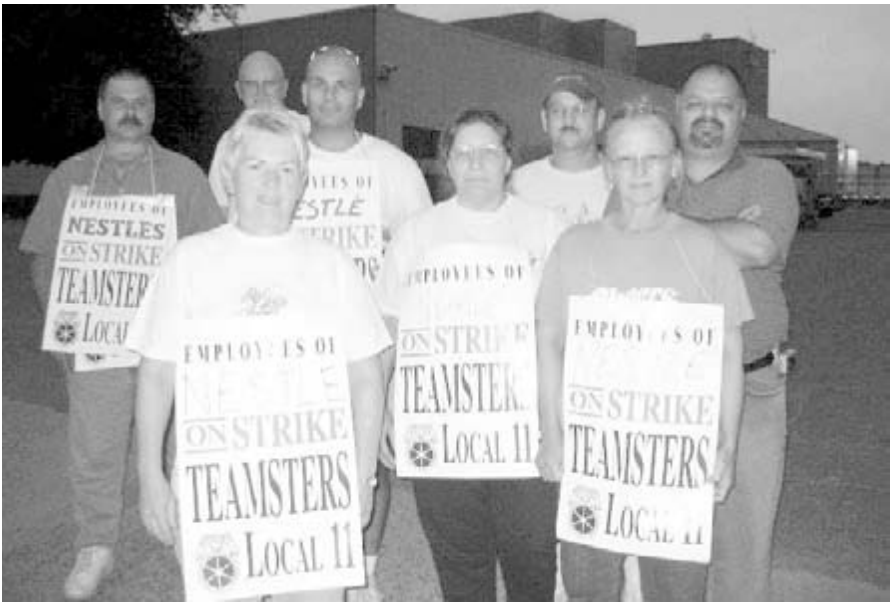
And while median household income has increased by more than 30 percent over the last decade, real wages have declined, lagging behind the rise in cost of living. The number of households living at or below the official poverty level has also risen by nearly 20 percent. A study by the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute concluded that the city’s minimum wage of \$6.15 an hour is worth less when adjusted for inflation than in 1979.

And the buying power of the city’s maximum welfare payments—\$379 a month for a family of three—fell by nearly a third over the last decade.

Bivens and Henderson say they spend about half their income on rent. “Every month I know I have to set aside two checks to pay the rent,” said Bivens. “Another one goes to food, then there is gas, electricity and water. After that there’s nothing left.”

Just under 60 percent of households in the

## Teamsters strike Nestlé plant in New Jersey



Militant/Sara Lobman

FREEHOLD, New Jersey—The 180 members of the Teamsters union at the Nestlé plant here went on strike August 1 after unanimously rejecting the company’s contract proposal. The company is demanding increased deductibles and co-pays on medical insurance that would jack up the amount workers pay from about 10 percent of their weekly pay to between 16 and 24 percent. Most importantly, according to workers on the picket line, the company wants the right to increase these payments without union agreement during the course of the contract.

“Nothing in the proposed contract was good,” said Rich Sager, a spray dryer operator with 26 years in the plant. “But health care was the strike issue.”

Nestlé, the world’s biggest food and drink company, posted profits of \$228 billion for the first half of 2004, up about 2 percent compared to the first half of last year.

—SARA LOBMAN

city rent. Of those more than half are paying at least 30 percent of their monthly income for rent. And nearly a third are paying at least half of their income for rent.

Working people who own their homes face a similar squeeze. Just over 72 percent of homeowners are paying mortgages with an average payment of \$1,291 per month. Just under a third pay 30 percent of their income in housing costs, and 12 percent pay at least 50 percent. The overcrowding rate in apartments—that is, households occupied by more than one person per room—is 12.7 percent, according to government figures.

Opponents of the city’s modest system of rent control regulation have argued since its passage in 1985 that eliminating rent control would provide an incentive for businessmen to step up housing construction, and that the resulting increase in vacancy rates would hold down rents. Currently, rental units built after 1975 or those in federal or city-owned buildings are exempt from rent control.

A report by the Urban Institute based on the 2000 Census data showed that rental vacancy rates have declined in the city over the last decade, from 8.0 percent to 6.2 percent. This has resulted in higher rent increases than in other cities in the surrounding region.

Working people are also being squeezed by the cyclical rise in property values in the city. In many of the city’s working-class districts, especially near the downtown area and along the historic U Street corridor, where single-family brick homes and businesses once abounded, high-rise luxury buildings featuring on-site laundries, spas, and restaurants are being built, a process known throughout the country as gentrification.

In the downtown area, even affluent Blacks had kept out during the decades of Jim Crow segregation. In contrast, throughout the last century the U Street corridor was a center of businesses owned by Blacks. Its residents included the noted jazz composer Duke Ellington.

Large sections of the corridor, also known as the Black Broadway, were destroyed in the wake of the Black rebellion that broke out here in 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. For decades, much of the corridor remained in burned-out ruins, as real estate sharks and banks refused to invest in redeveloping the area. In so doing they drove down property values and many of the area’s more affluent residents and businesses fled, while poorer layers of workers remained. Real estate speculators

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## THE MILITANT

### Find out about Utah miners’ fight for union

After a 10-month strike, Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, returned to work July 12 and have continued the battle for the union from inside. The ‘Militant’ has covered this fight every week for a year. New subscribers can get two back issues of their choice to learn more about this important labor struggle. Don’t miss a single issue!



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## Calero on leave for presidential run

Róger Calero, a *Militant* staff writer and associate editor of the Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*, is on leave beginning with this issue through the November 2 elections because of his candidacy for U.S. president on the Socialist Workers slate. Calero is now campaigning for the socialist ticket.

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# U.S. Defense Dep’t reports admit abuse of Iraqi prisoners

BY SAM MANUEL

Two reports released in August by the U.S. Department of Defense on the abuse and torture of Iraqi detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison, which came to light in April, widen the number of U.S. military personnel who could face charges or administrative punishment. Together, the investigators found that 54 military police officers, military intelligence soldiers, medics, and “civilian contractors” bore some degree of responsibility.

The reports add few additional details to those already publicized about the abuse, but are aimed at cleaning up the image of U.S. imperialism. Through such reports and trials of soldiers, Washington seeks to put the scandal behind it and minimize the political price it has to pay stemming from the worldwide trend that renders torture of prisoners less and less acceptable for the majority of humanity.

“The damage these incidents have done to U.S. policy, to the image of the U.S. among populations whose support we need in the Global War on Terror and to the morale of our armed forces, must not be repeated,” is how one of the reports summarizes its purpose. This 126-page document, called the Schlesinger report, gives the conclusions of a panel to investigate the abuse at Abu Ghraib that was appointed by U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld. The body was headed by former secretary of defense James Schlesinger.

A second report, based on an investigation conducted by the U.S. military, said that responsibility for the abuse went up the chain of command to the highest ranking officer in Iraq at the time, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez.

Sanchez was recalled from his post earlier this summer. In May the U.S. Army suspended indefinitely Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski and removed her from command of the 800th Military Police Brigade until investigation into the abuse of prisoners is complete. Karpinski was in charge of the 16 U.S.-run prisons in Iraq, including the one at Abu Ghraib.

Seven soldiers facing various charges resulting from their alleged role in the abuse at the prison have said in their defense that they were simply following the orders of their superiors.

The military investigation cited 44 instances of “detainee abuse committed by MPs [Military Police] and MI Soldiers [Military Intelligence], as well as contractors.” The latter is a euphemism for guards and other personnel trained in private prisons in the United States, or during previous stints in the military, who are hired through private agencies that provide such goons to the army.

“On sixteen of these occasions,” the report said, “abuse by the MP Soldiers was, or was alleged to have been, requested, encouraged, condoned, or solicited by MI personnel.” The Schlesinger report cites about 300 incidents of abuse of detainees being held in U.S. jails in Afghanistan, Iraq, and at the U.S. Naval base at Guantánamo

Bay, Cuba. Out of the 155 charges of abuse investigated so far, it was judged that in 66 cases detainees were abused by U.S. troops. The majority of these, 55 cases, were in Iraq. U.S. personnel caused the deaths of five detainees during interrogation, the report says. Another 23 deaths of detainees remain under investigation.

A theme that runs throughout both reports is that authorities at the prison were under pressure to obtain information from detainees believed to have knowledge about insurgents fighting the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

This argument, however, is contradicted by the finding in the military’s report, which says, “Most, though not all, of the violent or sexual abuses occurred separately from scheduled interrogations and did not focus on persons held for intelligence purposes.”

The report holds General Sanchez responsible for the introduction into Abu Ghraib of more aggressive grilling methods that had been approved by Rumsfeld for use against “enemy combatants” held in Afghanistan and at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. These methods include threatening detainees with military dogs, strip searches, nudity, sense deprivation, and being held in isolation in extremely cold or hot cells. They began being used at Abu Ghraib after Sanchez met with Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, then in charge of the Guantánamo prison. The report says that Sanchez inappropriately attempted to apply the methods at Abu Ghraib.

Abuses at the prison “spanned from direct physical assault,” the report says, “such as delivering head blows rendering detainees unconscious, to sexual posing and forced participation in group masturbation.” It also cites an alleged rape observed by a female translator and the sexual assault of a female detainee. The report describes the acts as “without question, criminal.”

The report describes the case of a Syrian national, one of the 44 cases, allegedly captured while fighting occupation forces in Iraq and who had suffered gun-shot wounds and a broken leg. The prisoner told investigators that guards repeatedly threatened to kill him, forced him to eat pork, drink alcohol, and to curse Islam, his religion. He said guards beat him on his broken leg and urinated on him. Over several days he was beaten and threatened to be bitten by dogs while handcuffed to the upper bunk bed of his cell and later to the cell door. A medic



AFP/Getty Images/Antonio Scorza

**Iraqis at entrance of Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad, May 20, in hope of getting information about family members held by U.S. occupation forces there.**

who found him cuffed to the cell door with a dislocated shoulder confirmed the man’s claims, the report says.

Despite the medic’s corroboration, the report adds that while it is likely some soldiers treated the detainee harshly, his accusations are “potentially the exaggerations of a man who hated Americans.”

“Ghosts Detainees” incarcerated and held by the CIA were never accounted for in the prison rolls. A request from a Saudi general on the whereabouts of three medical personnel from his country said that they were not in U.S. custody. Similar requests for information on the men from Paul Bremer, then the U.S. proconsul in Iraq, the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, and U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell produced the same result. These men were in fact being held at Abu Ghraib, which was only publicized when an intelligence soldier “recalled” that three men had been brought in by CIA officers.

The report describes how this procedure of not identifying CIA prisoners facilitated the cover-up of the death of a detainee. CIA agents brought the man to Abu Ghraib on the morning of Nov. 4, 2003, it says. He was suffering from a head wound resulting from being struck with a rifle butt during capture by a Navy Seal team. His presence in the prison was not recorded.

About 30–45 minutes after his arrival a guard was summoned to a shower where the detainee was being held because he was not moving. An Iraqi doctor in the prison confirmed the detainee was dead. The deceased was placed in a body bag packed with ice. The next day he was removed from the prison on a litter, to make it appear that he was only ill. The autopsy gave the cause of death as “a blood clot in the head, likely

a result of injuries he sustained during apprehension,” the report says.

Commanders at the prison on occasion denied representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to detainees. In one case an ICRC delegation attempted to visit a Syrian national who had been held in a cell six and a half feet long and less than three feet wide. The cell was completely dark, with no window, latrine, water tap, or bed. On the door the ICRC delegates noticed the inscription “the Gollum,” and a picture of the character from the book and film trilogy *Lord of the Rings*.

Abuse of detainees at the prison by threatening them with attack by military dogs began “almost immediately upon the arrival of the animals on Nov. 20, 2003.” The report says that by that date “abuses of detainees was already occurring and addition of the dogs was just one more device.” The use of dogs was recommended by General Miller when he visited Abu Ghraib to assess the effectiveness of the prison.

In January, the report states, a guard and a military dog handler entered a cell where two Iraqi teenagers were being held. The dog handler allowed the unmuzzled dog to “go nuts on the kids,” barking and scaring them. Another soldier told military investigators that the dog handler joked that he was trying to make the teenagers defecate on themselves. He said the dog handler had also told him that he was in a competition with another dog handler after the two had earlier that day frightened a group of detainees into urinating on themselves. As the *Militant* reported last spring, this kind of abuse of Iraqi inmates mirrored similar practices widespread throughout the U.S. prison system.

## Germany: unions protest unemployment cuts

Continued from front page

the social wage of working people in order to remain competitive, during a period of growing economic crisis marked by intensifying competition among the main imperialist powers over domination of the world’s markets and resources. The capitalists in the United States, especially, have made more progress than their imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan in lowering labor costs and increasing labor productivity through job speed-up, cut-

ting the workforce without reducing production, and attacks on the social wage.

Unemployment benefits in Germany are among the highest in Europe, currently paying 60 percent of previous earnings for the first 32 months out of work, and about 55 percent thereafter. Hartz IV will reduce this to a single 12-month period and eliminate benefits after that, replacing unemployment compensation with welfare payments, which are currently 345 euro (\$422) per month in the west, and 331 euro plus rent and heating subsidies in the east. Welfare is available only for those “seeking work.”

Trade unions and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—the remnant of the pro-Moscow Communist Party that ruled east Germany—are building the Monday protests. The German Trade Union Federation and IG Metall, the largest industrial union in Germany with 2.8 million members, are among the labor groups behind the demonstrations.

IG Metall has another beef with Peter Hartz, who is the personnel director at Volkswagen, the largest auto company in Europe, where the union is demanding a 4 percent raise and 10-year job guarantee for 100,000 workers. The union has said it may strike if no agreement is reached by the end of October.

Numerous editorials in the German press indicate that the stability of the ruling Social Democratic Party is waning. The Berlin *Neus Deutschland* reported, “A hundred thousand people have left the [So-

cial Democratic] party. Some of them want to start a new one, and former party head Oskar Lafontaine is among them.”

The situation has increased political polarization in the country as the PDS, as well as right-wing nationalist parties such as the National Democratic Party and the German People’s Union, are gaining support. Support for the PDS has now grown to 7 percent nationwide in the polls, while the Social Democratic Party is at 21 percent. The PDS is now the second-strongest party in some of the most economically depressed areas of the east.

An economic report compiled by three German research institutes this year showed an increase from 12.5 percent in 2001 to 13.5 percent in 2002 in the number living below the official poverty level in Germany nationwide, as well as a widening gap in income levels.

Unemployment now stands at 8.5 percent in the west and 18.5 percent in the east. It has been particularly high in eastern Germany since reunification with the former West Germany in 1990, as state-run enterprises were shut down as part of the effort to re-establish capitalism.

An article in the August 10 *Wall Street Journal* pointed to an 0.3 rise in unemployment in Germany in April-June, or an additional 112,000 people out of work, as a positive example of the impact of the Hartz laws on jobs compared to the same period a year earlier, when unemployment rose 1.2 percent.

## Housing crisis in Washington, D.C.

Continued from Page 2

have since gobbled up the cheap properties, ready to cash in on a new cycle of rising property values.

In the process of gentrification, which city officials hail as “revitalization,” the corridor is now strung with new restaurants, night clubs, flower shops, and other businesses that attract a largely middle-class, white clientele.

In August, Sisterspace and Books, a center which features books by and about women of color, was evicted from its offices at 1515 U Street. The store’s owners were in the process of finishing negotiations for a loan to buy the building just days prior to the eviction. The Trust Company, which owns the building, took advantage of a delay in funding sought by the bookstore’s owners in order to evict them. The beneficiary to the Trust Co. is

a Black businessman who lives in nearby Maryland.

The owners of the bookstore have vowed to fight the eviction. “There seems to be little hope now,” said Raven Brown, a young woman standing outside the building a week later. “All signs of the place had been removed from the building. That’s what they want, to remove all signs of us,” she said angrily.

Alea Brown, a homeowner on U Street, saw it from a different point of view. In an August letter to the *Washington Post*, Brown defended the eviction, writing, “The closure of Sisterspace is the result of capitalism. Times change and so must business models if they plan to compete.”

Brown does have a point. The housing crunch that most residents of this city face certainly is the result of the normal operations of capitalism.



# Horizon mine bosses use bankruptcy to break union contracts

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH—The assets of Horizon Natural Resources, a coal operator that declared bankruptcy, are being carved up among three coal companies: Massey Energy, the country's fourth largest; and two new ones, founded by Wall Street financier Wilbur Ross, called Newcoal and Oldcoal.

The three companies were named the winner of an auction by the bankruptcy court after they made a combined offer of \$786 million for the Horizon mines, including \$304 million in cash. Horizon was valued at a little less than \$1 billion and had a similar amount of debts. The sale will be finalized at an August 31 hearing in Lexington, Kentucky. Horizon says it has operations at 20 locations in four states.

This carve-up marks the next stage in an ongoing battle by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to defend union contracts and the health-care benefits of working miners and retirees. Federal bankruptcy judge William Howard ruled August 9, after an earlier hearing, that Horizon does not have to honor its union contracts and its obligations for union retiree pensions and health-care benefits at the six mines it operates that are organized by the UMWA. This affects 800 working miners and 2,300 retirees. Howard said in his ruling that no buyer would want to take on the financial obligations associated with the union mines.

A Horizon spokesperson said that the contractual obligations made the union mines an "unattractive" offer.

Miners and retirees have been actively resisting this attack. The union has organized several protests at the bankruptcy court. Around 1,000 took part at the last protest on July 20. About 1,500 miners, retirees, and supporters rallied August 31 in Lexington, Kentucky, outside the court where the judge was finalizing the sale (further coverage in upcoming issues).

Miners have also shown their opposition to the company's course by taking union "memorial" days. Miners at the Cannelton mine in southern West Virginia have taken nine such days in a year. The current union contract allows for 10 memorial days in the life of the contract. These stoppages have enabled big participation of working miners at the protests in Kentucky.

"I went to Lexington when the judge ruled and there was a good show of support but we can't fight this one on our own," said Art Roach, a miner at Ziegler Coal in southern Illinois. "I think we should go to Washington, D.C., and show them who runs this country."

Financier Wilbur Ross has made his mark taking over bankrupt companies, where, as part of deals with the courts, the new owner has no responsibility for obligations to retirees. Pensions are taken over by the federal government, which often results

## Michigan nurses strike to defend jobs



Militant/Osborne Hart

MOUNT CLEMENS, Michigan—Nurses at the 288-bed General Hospital here went on strike August 9. They continue to walk the line after rejecting a second offer from management. Some 540 registered nurses, organized by Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 40, struck against company demands for a reduction in staff size and job combinations—"moving nurses among hospital units" to cover shortages, strikers said—and to defend their health coverage and pensions. The nurses had been working without a contract since February 27. Management has hired U.S. Nursing, a Denver outfit that specifically recruits nurses to scab during hospital strikes, to replace union members.

in a substantial cut in retirement benefits. Health-care benefits are eliminated.

This is how Ross built International Steel Group in a few years into the largest steel producer in the United States, after taking over bankrupt or ailing steelmakers LTV, Bethlehem Steel, and Weirton. Ross also owns a textile operation called Interna-

tional Textile Group based on ownership of Burlington Industries and the takeover of the bankrupt Cone Mills.

Ross said he became interested in Horizon because he believes coal will undergo an economic boom in the next decade. "We've made some small investments in coal," he said. "This is our first big investment." Ross says he sees opportunities to buy other coal producers in the Appalachian area. The financier was named the lead buyer in the bankruptcy process. Ross's companies are slated to take over two union mines—Ziegler 11 in southern Illinois and Marrowbone in southwestern West Virginia.

Union mines Cannelton, in southern West Virginia, and Starfire, in eastern Kentucky, are slated to be taken over by Massey Energy. "We are very pleased to acquire these valuable properties that complement Massey's other Central Appalachian holdings," said Massey's chairman Don Blankenship.

Cannelton is on the north banks of the Kanawha river. South of it, in the Big Coal river valley, Massey has a slew of operations. It was here in the mid-1980s that UMWA members resisted the company (then A.T. Massey) and its attacks on the union as the company bought up previously union-organized mines in the area.

None of the Massey mines in Big Coal river are unionized now. Likewise, Massey has sizable operations in eastern Kentucky, all of them nonunion. Starfire, a surface operation, is the only UMWA mine in eastern Kentucky.

*Tony Lane is a member of UMWA Local 1248 in southwestern Pennsylvania.*

## Political football over new overtime rules

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The U.S. Labor Department's new rules on eligibility for overtime pay have become a political football in the presidential elections. The hundreds of pages of documents that "explain" the measures, which went into effect August 23, leave in place the many loopholes established under previous administrations, including that of William Clinton, allowing companies to deny premium pay to their employees. Congressional approval is not required for such rules to be put in force.

The original regulations were enacted under the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act. In 1999 the Labor Department estimated 80 percent of workers were guaranteed the right to overtime pay—time and a half for every hour worked past 40 in a week.

Speaking for the administration of President George W. Bush, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao claims the regulations "will strengthen overtime rights for 6.7 million American workers, including 1.3 million low-wage workers who were denied overtime under the old rules."

Under the new rules all workers earning wages of \$23,660 or less per year are eligible for overtime pay. The figure had remained at \$8,060 since 1975. The 5.4 million others whose rights will be "strengthened," according to the Labor Department, are those who were "at particular risk of being misclassified" under the numerous exemptions that exist in the labor codes.

In order for employees to be disqualified—or "exempted," in the language of the Department of Labor—from receiving overtime pay, they must satisfy each of three tests: their income has to be paid on a salary rather than hourly basis; they must earn above a certain minimum, which under the new code is \$23,660; and their "job duties must primarily involve executive, administrative, or professional duties." In addition, the new rules state that those earning salaries above \$100,000 per year, with few exceptions, are exempt from receiving overtime pay. The Labor Department's original proposal had been \$65,000.

These rules, of course, do not cover millions of undocumented workers, most of whom are paid cash by the bosses and never receive overtime pay or any other benefits stipulated under federal labor laws and regulations. This category also includes workers on parole or on probation. Many employers often count on the more vulnerable status of these workers to deny them

premium pay.

The point of contention centers on the millions of workers whose income falls between the \$23,660 and \$100,000 figures. The myriad rules that have existed under Democratic and Republican administrations alike had left open to employers the ability to classify them as executives, administrators, or professionals, in order to deny them premium pay for extra hours worked. The tweaking of the rules by the Bush administration leaves these loopholes in place for the bosses.

Democratic Party presidential candidate John Kerry attacked the new overtime rules in July as "a shameful assault on the paychecks of hard-working Americans." Using a study by the liberal Economic Policy Institute, a Democratic campaign statement charged that "Bush's overtime rule eliminates overtime pay for 6 million by changing the tests for exemption." Examples cited by this group include nursery school teachers, computer programmers, and police lieutenants.

The AFL-CIO has also criticized "Bush's

efforts to slash...overtime pay." Its fact sheets charge, for example, that under the new rules registered nurses (RNs) "are very likely to lose their overtime pay rights."

Elaine Chow of the Labor Department responded to what she described as its critics' "myths, distortions and inaccuracies" with a list of jobs titles that it stated would not lose the right to overtime. These include nurses, production workers, and paramedics.

The new regulations, like the previous ones, disqualify RNs from receiving overtime pay. Licensed practical nurses (LPNs), however, remain eligible for premium pay for overtime.

Chao claimed the new rules would make things easier for both bosses and workers by ending "the lawsuit lottery that is delaying justice for workers and stifling our economy with billions of dollars of needless lawsuits." A representative of the conservative Heritage Foundation backed her statement, charging that "trial lawyers exploit this confusion" to make companies pay overtime to the many white-collar workers it says "were never supposed to be" eligible.

## Panama gov't pardons CIA-trained killers

Continued from front page

who had been convicted by a Panamanian court in April, have a long record of murderous attacks against the Cuban Revolution.

On their release Jiménez, Remón, and Novo, who are U.S. citizens, flew to Miami. Posada Carriles was flown to an undisclosed country on a separate flight, the *Miami Herald* reported August 27.

In November 2000, on the eve of a meeting of Latin American heads of state, Cuban officials publicly denounced the presence in Panama of Cuban ultrarightists who have been involved in numerous attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro. They announced that they had given Panamanian authorities the names of the main instigators, their addresses and telephone numbers, and other detailed information. Only after this public disclosure did the Panamanian police arrest Posada and the others, who were found with 33 pounds of explosives in their possession.

For years the Cuban government had sought the extradition of the four men. Finally, in April of this year, a Panamanian court convicted the four on charges

of "endangering public safety," claiming they could not be charged with attempted murder because no detonators were found in the area where the attack was supposed to be carried out. Cuban officials said the rightists had planned to set off the explosives at a public meeting at the University of Panama where Castro had been invited to speak. The court handed down sentences ranging from seven to eight years. Havana protested the light sentences.

Moscoso granted the pardon just days before her term of office ended. A close ally of the U.S. government, Moscoso denied that Washington had influenced her government's decision to pardon the four rightists. She argued that she had done so to prevent a future administration from extraditing them to Cuba and Venezuela. "I knew that if these men stayed here, they would be extradited to Cuba and Venezuela and there they were surely going to kill them," Moscoso claimed.

The Venezuelan government recalled its ambassador from Panama, Flavio Granados, to protest these remarks, which it called a "serious and false accusation."

Granados noted that there is no death penalty in Venezuela, even "for terrorists who have been pardoned."

Cuba had threatened to break relations if Moscoso pardoned the convicted rightists. In response, the Panamanian government withdrew its ambassador from Havana August 24 and ordered the Cuban ambassador to leave Panama; the pardons were announced days later.

President-elect Martín Torrijos, of the social-democratic Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), expressed his disagreement with the pardons and said he would work to repair relations with Cuba, the Reuters news agency reported.

U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli denied charges in the Panamanian media that Washington played any role in the pardons.

Posada Carriles has had a long association with the CIA and was part of the U.S.-backed mercenary invasion of Cuba in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs, which was crushed by Cuban working people. Subsequently the CIA recruited him to carry out assassination attempts against

Continued on Page 10

# Socialists sell hundreds of books, draw interest during N.Y. protests

BY PAUL PEDERSON

NEW YORK—“Before I met you I was planning to vote for Kerry,” said a young Puerto Rican restaurant worker who met Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero at a campaign open house Sunday afternoon, August 29, after getting a flyer for the event at the large protest rally that day in Manhattan (see front-page article). “Now I realize what a waste of a vote that would have been. I plan to vote for the Socialist Workers Party.

“You guys have changed the way I look at things,” he said, as he left with three books published by Pathfinder Press: *Socialism on Trial*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism*. This young worker was one among about two dozen people who met the socialists for the first time at actions protesting the Republican convention August 28–29 and came to the Sunday open house and a campaign forum the night before.

On Saturday night, August 28, the New York Militant Labor Forum featured Calero and his running mate, Ar-rin Hawkins. SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York Martín Koppel chaired the meeting. Socialist

campaigners Jenny Johnson-Blanchard and Warren Simons also spoke. A fund pitch by Ved Dookhun, SWP candidate for the 10th Congressional District in New Jersey, netted \$1,700 for the SWP 2004 campaign. It was a standing room only meeting, as more than 120 people packed the socialist campaign center in Manhattan’s Garment District. Most everyone stayed through the end despite sweltering heat that resulted from a breakdown of the air conditioning system during the event.

Justine Davies, a student at Sarah Lawrence College, had joined the SWP contingent at a march to defend a woman’s right to choose abortion earlier Saturday (see article on page 8). She said she disliked not only Bush, but Kerry too, and was glad to find campaigners offering a working-class alternative to the capitalist parties. She came back with the socialists and stayed for the event.

These meetings were part of a special 12-day effort by the socialist campaign to build support for SWP 2004 ticket at protests, conferences, and in the streets leading up to and during the Republican National Convention. Dozens of volunteers joined the effort from cities around the country, as well as from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

As of August 31, socialist campaigners had sold 785 books and pamphlets on the history and lessons of the revolutionary working-class movement, most of them at steeply discounted rates (see ad on page 6). They also sold more than 1,000 single copies and 157 subscriptions to the *Militant* and 25 to its sister publication in Spanish *Perspectiva Mundial*.

In addition to campaigning, the socialists organized public classes. These included a discussion on *The Lesser Evil?* by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, a class on “Marxism v. Anarchism,” and another on “The Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class.”

A Militant Labor Forum planned for September 3 on “The meaning of the Republican National Convention and the Protests Surrounding it” will cap these activities, which have served as a launching pad for effective campaigning around the country for the socialist ticket through the November 2 election and beyond.

A highlight of the sales effort was the August 29 pro-



Militant/Argiris Malapanis  
**SWP presidential candidate Róger Calero (center, with glasses) campaigning in New York’s Union Square Park at August 29 protest march.**

test march. A total of 806 single copies of the *Militant*, 75 subscriptions to the *Militant* and *PM*, and 249 books were sold that day alone.

The week’s activities gave a running start to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription drive, which officially began on August 28. The ten-week drive will conclude November 7, the weekend after election day. Partisans of the two socialist publications have a goal of signing up more than 3,000 subscribers in the 10 weeks.

The buzz around the SWP campaign headquarters has drawn interest from others in the building.

Ines, a garment worker who came to New York from Puebla, Mexico, was going floor-by-floor looking for work August 31 when she came across the socialist campaign headquarters.

“At first I thought this was a bookstore,” she said. “Then I came in and saw what was happening. I didn’t think such a place as this existed in this country.

“I came in because I like to read,” she told Calero, who was there at the time with a group of volunteers. After some discussion, Ines bought a copy of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*, which explains why the education system under capitalism is designed to teach working people to be obedient, not to learn to think for themselves

“I went to school until the sixth grade but didn’t learn how to read,” she said, commenting on how accurate the pamphlet’s description of education under capitalism is. “It’s hard to learn when you are hungry. I would watch my cousin reading the comics in the newspaper and laughing, but I would look and not be able to read the captions. So I taught myself.” She promised to visit the socialist campaign center again.

## Miners plan to mark one year of fight

Continued from front page

Huntington. Co-Op miners Celso Panduro and Ricardo Chávez took part in the event along with Estrada. “They are waging this kind of war against us even though all such activity by the bosses is supposed to be illegal, according to the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB] settlement the Co-Op bosses and the union signed, under which we returned to work in July. We are documenting and publicizing all these incidents and are working together to stand up for our dignity on the job.”

The solidarity committee, which includes union members and students, also plans to organize a picket line in Salt Lake September 18, miners said, in front of the office of Carl Kingston, one of the prominent members of the Kingston family, which owns the Co-Op mine. Through the publicity around the September 18 action, unionists and students in Salt Lake say they are planning to fill a bus for the anniversary event in Huntington.

The NLRB ordered C.W. Mining, also known as the Co-Op mine, to reinstate the 75 workers the company fired Sept. 22, 2003, because they protested victimization of union supporters by management, and demanded safe working conditions and representation by the UMWA. The NLRB ruled the miners were fired illegally, are eligible for back pay for losses during the strike, and can vote for the union of their choice. The labor board ordered a union election after most of the miners signed a petition demanding it, and held a hearing in Price, Utah, to determine who will be eligible to vote. It has not yet announced a ruling based on that hearing or the date for a representation election. The miners were back on the job July 12, after the company made an unconditional offer to return following the NLRB decisions.

When the bosses are not doing the harassment directly, their relatives working at the mine will do it for them, Estrada told the unionists and youth at the August 28 meeting. “I sometimes work on a crew with one of Carl Kingston’s sons,” the miner said. “He makes a point of telling me he reads everything I and other miners tell the press about the fight at Co-Op, and accuses me of lying. The Kingston relatives also constantly spout the company line that Co-Op can’t afford to pay us more than \$5 to \$7 an hour, and will close down the mine if the workers press for the union.”

Estrada told the Salt Lake group that their solidarity is needed now as much as when the workers were walking the picket line.

“Management has a lot of family members working in the mine right now trying to dissuade workers from going with the UMWA, and they obviously organize what they are going to say and do,” Estrada said. “Out of the blue, one day last week, all of the Kingstons started saying, ‘I like working here, I like the conditions at this mine.’ They just repeat what the company says.”

The Kingstons are claiming more than 100 family members and close relatives employed at the mine now have a right to vote in the upcoming union election on the basis of being part-time, seasonal, and office personnel, including management personnel. Workers will have a choice of voting for representation by the UMWA, a company outfit called the International Association of United Workers Union, or no union. The UMWA contends that all management employees and Kingston family members should be excluded from the vote because of their loyalty to the company owners.

The miners speaking at the Salt Lake meeting also said that the company is not hiring new workers at the mine, even though the mine is short-handed, for fear new employees would be partisans of the UMWA in an election. All miners are working 12-hour shifts, four days a week. They are also routinely asked, and sometimes pressured, to work longer hours and extra days.

“A boss sent a co-worker of mine to tell me to stay for a second shift after coming off a 12-hour graveyard shift,” said Ricardo Chávez. “They wanted me to work another 15 and a half hours! I said no.” Some miners do volunteer to work extra days to compensate for their low hourly wages, Chávez and other miners said.

One of the tactics of the company to divide and demoralize UMWA supporters is to target individual backers of the union, trying to get them to quit or break their spirit.

Alyson Kennedy, one of the leaders of the fight here, has come under such attack recently.

“I was written up twice last week for ‘poor work performance,’” Kennedy said in an interview. “I was moving

Continued on Page 8

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Spring Subscription Drive August 28–November 7: First 5 days					
Country	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
UNITED STATES					
Los Angeles	150	15	10%	50	6
Tampa	40	4	10%	10	0
Houston	75	6	8%	20	0
Philadelphia	95	8	8%	10	0
Price, UT	50	4	8%	20	3
Chicago	100	5	5%	40	0
Birmingham	35	1	3%	8	0
Pittsburgh	65	2	3%	4	0
Craig, CO	50	1	2%	20	0
Detroit	50	1	2%	10	0
NE Pennsylvania	55	1	2%	15	0
New York	250	5	2%	70	0
Newark	125	2	2%	25	0
Omaha	55	1	2%	45	1
San Francisco	125	3	2%	35	0
Seattle	50	1	2%	10	0
Twin Cities	105	2	2%	40	0
Atlanta	80	1	1%	20	0
Boston	100	1	1%	40	0
Miami	100	1	1%	50	0
Washington	115	1	1%	21	0
Cleveland	40	0	0%	10	0
Des Moines	65	0	0%	25	0
U.S. total	1975	66	3%	598	9
AUSTRALIA	55	0	0%	8	0
CANADA					
Montreal	32	0	0%	12	0
Toronto	85	0	0%	18	0
CANADA total	117	0	0%	30	0
ICELAND	25	0	0%	2	0
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	45	0	0%	1	0
Christchurch	35	0	0%	1	0
N.Z. total	80	0	0%	2	0
SWEDEN	30	0			0
UNITED KINGDOM					
Edinburgh	25	0	0%	2	0
London	50	0	0%	12	0
UK total	75	0	0%	12	0
12-day campaign*	-	157	-	-	25
Int'l totals	2357	223	9%	652	34
Goal/Should be	2500	150	6%	550	39
* 12 days of campaigning in New York Aug 21–Sept 1 at protests and events leading up to and during the Republican convention.					
	IN THE UNIONS				
	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	8	0	0%		
CANADA					
UNITE	2	0	0%	1	0
UFCW	6	0	0%	3	0
Total	8	0	0%	4	0
NEW ZEALAND					
NDU	2	0	0%		
MWU	2	0	0%		
Total	4	0	0%		
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	0	0%	1	0
UNITED STATES					
UFCW	135	0	0%	150	0
UMWA	30	0	0%	15	0
UNITE	45	0	0%	40	0
Total	210	0	0%	205	0

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.



# Farmers meet in Houston on fight for land

## Pursue campaign to reopen class action suit against racist discrimination

BY TONY DUTROW

HOUSTON—The Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), Inc., and the Black Farmers Pastors' Coalition, Inc., held a meeting here August 7 at the Greater Jerusalem Baptist Church in Houston's north side Black community. Jay Dison, BFAA, Inc.'s financial director, was the featured speaker on the history of the *Pigford et al v. Veneman* class action lawsuit to press the farmers' fight for land and against decades-old racist discrimination by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Dison described his group's campaign to reopen the lawsuit. This was the first meeting here for BFAA, Inc., which has held similar meetings in other cities.

A flyer publicizing the event featured the slogan "Tell Bush 'nem to make Ann 'nem pay Tim 'nem." The "'nem" is a popular reference to *et al.* Ann Venemen is the head of the USDA under the George W. Bush administration. Timothy Pigford is the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit against the USDA. Dison said that BFAA, Inc., is campaigning to change or overturn the consent decree that settled the lawsuit in 1999 under the William Clinton administration.

In 1997 several suits by farmers to protest racist discrimination by the USDA were consolidated into the *Pigford v. Glickman* class action suit. Daniel Glickman was the U.S. secretary of agriculture under Clinton. On April 14, 1999, a federal judge issued the consent decree, which farmers agreed to based on provisions for a tax-exempt \$50,000 payment to those who could provide minimal proof of discrimination, and for forgiveness of outstanding debts owed to



Militant/Brian Williams

Farmers and their supporters rally March 1999 in Washington, D.C., outside courthouse as hearing was held that led to settlement of class action suit against USDA.

the USDA. The decree also promised priority on future loan requests to farmers who had been discriminated against in the past. But that's not what has taken place.

"The vast majority of Black farmers," Dison said, "were unjustly denied, deliberately misled, or simply never informed as to their options in the consent decree. We want Timothy Pigford as well as *all* others who are owed money under the consent decree to be paid in full."

The BFAA leader asked those in the

audience for a show of hands if they had qualified in either Track A or Track B, the two choices for participation in the USDA settlement that the farmers could opt for. Only a few hands went up among the 70 people present. Dison then asked how many had been denied a settlement. Many raised their hands.

Dison discussed the meaning of the slogan "40 acres and mule"—the promise given to Blacks and other farmers that they would get land and means to till it—during

Radical Reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War, and the imposition of legal segregation in the South, known as Jim Crow, following defeat of Radical Reconstruction, through the struggle against racism today. The BFAA leader noted that 925,000 Black farmers owned 16 million acres of land in 1910. Today, he said, this number has been reduced to about 26,000 farmers who own just over 2 million acres of land.

The *Pigford v. Veneman* case covers only documented cases of abuses against Black farmers from 1981 on, Dison said, thus disregarding decades of racist land grabbing and denial of credit.

During the discussion period many family members of farmers now deceased came forward with stories of the fight to save their farms. Farmers from Matagorda and Washington counties in Texas, and Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, were also in attendance. One farmer from Bay City, Texas, said that he supported any effort to get justice for farmers who are Black. "I came up to see how we can move this forward," he said. "The USDA has been getting away with murder from years ago and we have to keep fighting this."

Dison stressed the need to press the legal fight through the courts for a reopening of the settlement. To bolster its case for reopening the suit, BFAA, Inc., has prepared a questionnaire to gather information on the extent of the USDA denial of even the paltry \$50,000 Track A claim, and those wrongly turned down after filing for the more substantial restitution under Track B claims. Everyone there was asked to sign up as members of BFAA, Inc., to join the class action suit campaign whether or not they are actively farming or were previously denied settlement claims by the government. Those with parents now deceased who farmed during that period also were encouraged to join the fight.

Anthony Dutrow, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the state's 7th C.D. in Houston, explained why the SWP places immediate relief to working farmers on the party's national campaign platform. "Workers and farmers face the same enemies and can be united to defeat them," he told the meeting. "My campaign calls for stopping farm foreclosures, and demands government-funded cheap credit for working farmers and price supports to cover production costs."

Dutrow continued, "Although capitalism profits from exploiting all working farmers, it's clear from the racist practices exposed by the suit against the USDA that not all farmers have been treated equally."

"The USDA hoped the 1999 settlement would brush this history of racist discrimination under the rug. Clearly, all working people in hearing these facts and the dismal record of the USDA in settling with only a fraction of the affected farmers can join in offering solidarity in this effort. I will use my campaign toward that goal."

After the meeting ended, most of those filing out of the church took copies of the SWP campaign platform and some stayed for further discussion with supporters of the socialist campaign.

## SWP in fight for Delaware ballot status

BY JOHN STUDER

WILMINGTON, Delaware—"We are here today to place the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot," Roy Inglee, one of three electors for the SWP presidential ticket of Róger Calero and Arrin Hawkins, said at an August 31 press conference here on the steps of the Carvel State Building.

TV Channel 2, the *Wilmington News Journal*, and WILM-AM news radio sent reporters. Inglee and Hawkins described the socialist platform and fight to win ballot status. Rebecca Arenson and David Colton, the other two electors for the

Continued on next page

Questions posed in the 2004 elections aren't new  
Lessons for the struggles of today and tomorrow

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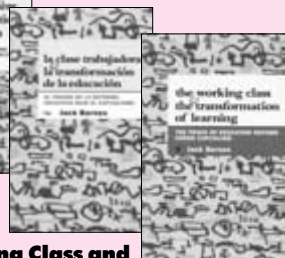
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# Republican convention

**Continued from front page**

cians, who seek to project the image of tough, down-to-earth, straight-talkers, demagogically presented the Bush team as “winners” who offer “options” to those willing to work hard, in contrast to what they portrayed as Democratic naysayers.

As expected, the Republican convention highlighted the campaign theme of the Bush administration’s role in leading the global “war on terrorism,” taking advantage of the gains that the U.S. imperialist rulers have made abroad, especially in their invasion and occupation of Iraq. The keynote speakers appealed to voters to rally as “Americans” behind the incumbent commander-in-chief.

As the *Militant* goes to press, however, media reports indicated that the most important theme Bush would present on the final day of the convention was a second-term domestic agenda. Editorials appeared in numerous dailies September 1, through which the ruling class prepared the ground for what its commander-in-chief would present in New York the next day.

## Promoting an ‘ownership society’

At campaign stops ranging from a rally in the steel town of Wheeling, West Virginia, to a farm show near Des Moines, Iowa, Bush offered proposals that he said would, in face of economic uncertainty, allow U.S. residents to save and invest more, giving them greater control over the money they put into retirement, health-care, and savings plans.

“We live in a time of change, and change can be very unsettling,” the president said August 30 at a rally in Wheeling before an audience of 10,000 steelworkers and other residents. “Not all that long ago, moms stayed at home,” Bush said. “Not all that long ago, a person would work for one company and retire with that company, and that company provided the health care and retirement. That’s changing,” he said.

The answer to today’s conditions, he said, is to promote an “ownership society.”

“Boomers like me” are guaranteed a se-

cure retirement, Bush stated (“baby boomers” refers to the generations born between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s, when the birthrate skyrocketed during the post-war boom). But “the fiscal solvency of Social Security is in doubt for the young workers coming up,” he said.

As a solution to this alleged problem, Bush proposed that individuals be able to own a “personal retirement account.” Under this scheme, some taxes paid into Social Security would be funneled into individual accounts. Bush presented this as a way for people to put money in their own pockets and to be free to invest it any way they want.

Secondly, the president promoted individual “health savings accounts” that allow families to accumulate money tax-free for future medical expenses. He sold this as a way for workers to keep their health insurance even if they change jobs or are out of work.

In addition, said Bush in an August 28 speech, since many people work for small businesses that cannot afford to provide health insurance for employees, the solution is to “let small businesses pool together and purchase insurance at the same discount that big businesses are able to do.” He said such a measure, along with limiting “frivolous lawsuits” against hospitals and doctors, would ensure that “health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, D.C., bureaucrats” and trial lawyers, who Republicans personify as Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards.

Thirdly, Bush has called for making permanent two tax cuts that are due to expire in coming years. In 2001 and 2003 Congress approved tax cuts totaling about \$2 trillion over a 10-year period.

He counterposed this plan to promises by Democrats to finance new spending by taxing the rich. “You’ve heard that before, haven’t you?” Bush said. “You know how it works: the rich dodge, and you pay.”

Bush was also expected to call for making the federal tax code “fairer and



Getty Images/Paul J. Richards and Alex Wong

**Former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani and California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger speaking at the Republican National Convention August 30 and 31. Both tried to project the image that Bush and the Republicans represent the “real America.”**

simpler.”

Some Republican politicians have proposed going further by establishing a national sales tax or even a flat tax to replace the federal income tax along with the Internal Revenue Service. This idea has been promoted in a new book by House Speaker Dennis Hastert, *Speaker: Forty Years in Coaching and Politics*.

While a national sales tax would fall heaviest on working people, who spend a larger share of their income on basic consumer goods than the rich, its advocates argue that it would close all loopholes the wealthy use to avoid paying income taxes and would encourage saving and investment to give families more control over their financial fate. These proposals play on the growing insecurity among working people and the middle classes about the future.

An article in the August 30 online edition of the *Economist* magazine noted that poorer sections of the working class now spend more than 35 percent of their budget on housing and just 16 percent on food, and that “child care, done for free by the mothers and grandmothers of the 1950s and 1960s, is now a big expense.” Some 35.9 million people, or 12.5 percent of the population, fell below the official poverty line in 2003—1.3 million more than the year before. And over the same period, 1.3 million fewer people were covered by employer-sponsored health plans.

## Appeal to ‘winners’

In the days leading up to Bush’s appearance, the Republican convention was marked by speeches by Republican leaders Giuliani and Schwarzenegger, who sought to project the image that Bush and the Republicans represent the “real America”—those who through ambition and hard work become “successful.”

In his keynote speech Giuliani, billed as a resolute leader and “hero” during the post-9/11 days in New York, portrayed the “real New Yorkers” as tough cops, firefighters, and construction workers who “have arms that are bigger than my legs, and...opinions that are bigger than their arms.”

Bush, he said, has acted by “combating terrorism at the source, beyond our shores, so we don’t have to confront it” at home. He lauded what he described as the successes in the Bush administration’s foreign policy—from the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, to the capitulation by the Libyan government to U.S. imperialism’s demand that it dismantle all its chemical and nuclear weapons facilities.

“In choosing a president we really don’t choose just a Republican or a Democrat, a conservative or a liberal,” Giuliani said, striking an America-first tone. “We choose a leader.” He painted Kerry as a weak-kneed waffler who does not meet such criteria.

Reinforcing these themes, Schwarzenegger demagogically proclaimed that he embodied the “American dream” of an immigrant who arrived with empty pockets and became a success story. He addressed “my fellow immigrants,” saying those who are ambitious can do likewise.

Schwarzenegger, whose verbal support

for abortion rights, civil unions for gays, and gun control differs from the stance of the Republican “social right,” appealed to undecided voters to support Bush in the elections. “Maybe you don’t agree with this party on every single issue,” he said. “I say to you tonight I believe that’s not only okay, that’s what’s great about this country.”

He portrayed Democratic critics of the administration as pessimists and “economic girlie men,” repeating a phrase he has used to get in the face of liberal opponents.

In contrast, Schwarzenegger said, under the Bush administration “America is back”—a reference to his famous line in the “Terminator” movie.

Giuliani and Schwarzenegger used demagoguery in these speeches to appeal to professionals, small and medium businesspeople, and better-off workers to side with the “winners” in American society. This tone contrasted with that of liberal Democratic politicians who claim concern for the “underprivileged.” Earlier fake appeals by the Republican Party to Black and Latino voters were virtually absent the first three days of the convention.

Given the relatively high abstention rate among working people that weights U.S. elections toward the middle classes, and the fact that millions of immigrants don’t have the right to vote, this appeal by the Republicans may pay off at the voting booth.

These themes were much more representative of the Republican convention than the conservative party platform adopted on the first day of the gala. The platform endorsed constitutional bans on gay marriage and abortion. As expected, the nonbinding document, a cost-free nod to the conservative wing of the party, was a nonissue in the convention.

First Lady Laura Bush in her August 31 speech praised the president for providing federal funding for stem cell research, a position that is anathema to the anti-abortion Republican right. And the previous week Vice President Richard Cheney commented extensively on the fact that his daughter Mary Cheney is a lesbian, saying he had “enormous pride” in both of his daughters.

Meanwhile, Democratic vice-presidential candidate Edwards attacked Bush for his comment that the U.S. government had been surprised by the rapid collapse of the army of the Baathist regime in Iraq in face of the Anglo-American invasion, and by the insurgency that followed.

“It was catastrophic to launch a war without a plan to win the peace,” Edwards said, reiterating the principal theme of the Democratic presidential campaign—that a Kerry White House would be more effective in waging war and fighting “terrorism” than the current administration.

Because the White House has a solid four-year record of carrying out this course on behalf of the U.S. rulers, however, the argument by Kerry and Edwards has not given them much advantage in the election campaign.

In fact, Kerry has now slipped behind Bush in opinion polls. In a recent *Washington Post*-ABC News poll, Bush was ahead of Kerry 48 percent to 47 percent among all registered voters surveyed. A similar poll taken after the Democratic convention showed Kerry leading by 5 percent.

# Delaware ballot challenge



Militant/Bob Stanton

**August 31 news conference in Wilmington, Delaware. From left, David Colton, Rebecca Arenson, SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins, and Roy Inglee.**

**Continued from previous page**

socialist ticket, also took part in the press conference. Colton is chief negotiator for the union of professors at the University of Delaware.

More than 500 Delawareans registered SWP over the last month to put the party on the ballot, nearly twice the state requirement.

“Delaware state officials have told us they intend to challenge our right to be on the ballot,” Inglee told the press. “They say they are refusing to honor the wishes of 292 of the people who registered Socialist Workers, the overwhelming majority because they were already registered.

Delaware election commissioner Frank Calio said the state will not count the signatures of 55 people who were previously registered ‘independent’ and signed to change their registration to SWP, the

*News Journal* reported. State officials had previously declared a March-September “moratorium” on voters changing their party registration. “‘Independent’ is a choice, and we consider that the same as a party,” said Calio.

Inglee said that if the socialists’ right to be on the 2004 ballot is challenged, the campaign would fight the undemocratic exclusion politically and legally.

A number of people from Delaware sent statements to the press expressing solidarity with the SWP ballot effort here. They include Sally Milberry-Steen, a leader of the peace group Pacem in Terris, and Gregory Chute, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Newark.

After the press conference, the socialists drove to Dover, the state capitol, where election officials accepted the socialist candidates’ slate of electors.



# N.Y. march: ‘defend women’s right to choose!’



Militant/Nicole Sarmiento

August 28 march across Brooklyn Bridge to defend a woman’s right to choose

## Utah miners plan for anniversary of fight

Continued from Page 5

a scoop and accidentally bumped it against another piece of mine equipment, a ram car. No damage was done to either piece of equipment. The boss told me I would be losing supplemental pay in my next pay check, and would receive two occurrences.”

According to “C.W. Mining Personnel Guidelines,” Kennedy said, if a miner has seven occurrences he or she receives a three-day suspension and a final written warning. A miner can be terminated after eight occurrences and rehired in two weeks as general labor. Occurrences are cumulative. Only one is eliminated every 90 days.

As a way of keeping workers in line, the Co-Op bosses pay workers an arbitrary “supplemental bonus” each week, which is a small percentage of hourly wages. The bosses can take away the bonus for any number of reasons—getting hurt on the job, damaging equipment, attendance, alleged poor work performance, asserting safety rights or saying something the boss doesn’t like, among others—workers said. This threat of loss of pay is always held over workers’ heads.

In addition to the formal written complaints issued against Kennedy, which go on her record and can be used to build up a case to fire her, Kennedy said that the bosses and their hirelings routinely harass her verbally. Loren Reynolds, the brother of mine manager Charles Reynolds, recently badgered Kennedy about her reasons for working at the mine. According to Kennedy, Reynolds said, “Alyson, why are you working here? You’re a woman. How old are you? Over 50? You shouldn’t be working in a mine. Why aren’t you married? How much is the UMWA paying you to be here? Why are you trying to destroy a ‘way of life?’”

Panduro, another leader of the effort to win UMWA representation, said it was important for the workers at the mine to defend Kennedy against the bosses’ harassment. “They’ve laid off some of the other leaders like Bill, Jesús, and myself,” he said. “Now they are going after Alyson. We can see through what they are doing and we can’t let them get away with it. It is blatant discrimination. We have to defend her and we have to get this story into the press.”

Kennedy is now the only woman working underground at the mine, miners said.

While the bosses alternate the union supporters against whom they direct the most severe harassment, Panduro said the company continues to operate the mine unsafely, which has a big impact on all workers. Roof bolters at the mine, which is Panduro’s job, are paid on a piece-rate basis—40 cents a bolt. Unheard of in other mines, paying workers piece rate for bolting means that an already dangerous job is made more hazardous due to pressure to make more money through speed-up and continuing to work when equipment is broken, miners said.

“Right now one of the roof bolters doesn’t have working torque gauges,” Panduro noted. “An operator doesn’t know if he is applying proper torque and securing the roof top correctly. Our crew has reported this to our supervisors, but they expect us to work with the defective equipment regardless.”

The Co-Op miners report that they are encouraged by the solidarity they are receiving since returning to work. That support, the efforts being made to stand up for workers rights at the mine, and explaining how low wages, unsafe conditions, and lack of respect will continue unless workers organize into a real union, has helped win new supporters for the union in the mine. “We are making steady progress in convincing many who crossed the picket line or were hired during the strike to vote for the UMWA when the election comes,” said Panduro. “The company, with its fake union, is not offering anything for the workers here.”

“My union and myself want the miners to win representation with the UMWA on their anniversary celebration,” said James Weddington, a retired longshore worker from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 23 in Tacoma, Washington, in an interview. “We continue to support the miners at Co-Op.” Weddington and Farrand Green, another ILWU member from Tacoma, visited the miners and their supporters in June of this year to learn first hand about the union struggle. They have used that trip to expand labor

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

NEW YORK—Several thousand supporters of a woman’s right to choose abortion marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to join a rally held here at City Hall on August 28. As the stream of demonstrators crossed the bridge from Brooklyn to Manhattan, their chants rang out: “Not the church, not the state, women must decide our fate!” and “Pro-life, that’s a lie, you don’t care if women die!”

The March for Women’s Lives was sponsored by Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Organization for Women/New York City, Black Women’s Health Imperative, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, and others.

A large majority of the marchers were young. Most were from the New York/New Jersey area, but a substantial number came from across the country.

“I’m here because abortion is a woman’s decision to make, no one else’s,” said Nathalie Chica, a 16-year old high school stu-

dent from Hackensack, New Jersey. “In a lot of places young women face restrictions on being able to get an abortion. I’m opposed to those restrictions.”

Many, like Anique Halliday and Alyssa Best, students at Rutgers University in New Jersey, said they had attended the nearly million-strong April 25 pro-choice march on Washington. Others were attending their first such demonstration.

The New York march was one of the larger protest actions being organized around the Republican National Convention. Most of the speakers focused on opposing the Bush administration at the polls, implicitly backing Democrat John Kerry. Among the speakers were Kerry’s sister, Peggy Kerry, and Democratic congressman Major Owens of New York. “This is the most important election in 50 years,” asserted Owens, a Kerry supporter. “If Bush is reelected, we will be smothered by a fascist, totalitarian government.”

Many of the marchers favored Kerry, believing his election will make a difference in protecting reproductive rights. Although there was an abundance of anti-Bush signs, only a handful of pro-Kerry signs were visible, and support for the Democratic candidate was mostly lukewarm.

Abhas Gupta, 23, a first-year student at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, was part of a contingent of youth called South Asians for Women’s Lives. “Our platform is to mobilize against the global gag rule,” he said.

He was referring to a U.S. government policy that denies U.S. funding to any organization that engages directly or indirectly in offering abortion services or counseling in other countries. The 1984 rule was restored by the Bush administration in January 2001. The Clinton administration had rescinded the measure in 1993, but then approved a limited “gag rule” in 1999.

Others expressed reservations about the Kerry campaign. “I’m protesting the Bush administration and the political war on women,” said Justine Davies, a student from Sarah Lawrence College in New York. “But this is not just about Bush. This is a march for abortion rights and expanding our rights.

“At first I thought Kerry was better than Bush,” she said, “but I don’t think Kerry thinks the right to choose is a priority. He said abortion is wrong, but supports the right to choose. He doesn’t have a strong line on it. And on Iraq, Kerry is more like Bush.”

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# N.Y. protests target Bush

Continued from front page

stated they would not organize a rally after the city administration and the courts denied their requests to hold one in Central Park.

There is a more plausible reason for their decision, however, which organizers did not touch on: the leadership of the Democratic Party did not want to have anything to do with such a rally, a stance that apparently kept well-known entertainers and all major Democratic Party figures away from the protest.

## Top Democrats oppose protests

The action “has got top Democrats in a major fret,” said an article in the August 28 *Kansas City Star*, headlined “Not Only GOP Fears New York Protests.” GOP, or Grand Old Party, is a common reference to the Republicans.

“Please,” said Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe, “let the Republicans have a great time, let them speak, let them go to their big corporate parties. If they can link us to a bunch of lawbreakers, they think people will not pay attention to the promises they’ve broken.” McAuliffe added that the Democratic Party had nothing to do with any of the New York demonstrations.

A press conference at the beginning of the march featured a handful of low-ranking Democrats, a few labor officials, and peace group representatives. Actor Danny Glover and actress Rosie Pérez were the only artists present. Congressmen Charles Rangel of Harlem and Major Owens of Brooklyn, Jesse Jackson, and four members of the New York City Council were the only Democratic Party politicians at the press conference.

“Wake up America,” declared Major Owens. “Because if you don’t Bush will be reelected, and our country will be heading to the snake pit of fascism.”

While relatively few signs at the demonstration promoted the false view that the Bush administration is “fascist,” a number of marchers shared the point by Owens that the majority of voters in the United States would be at fault if Bush wins a second term. “Fool America once, shame on Bush,” said a placard, the theme of which was repeated in other signs. “Fool America again and again and again and again, shame on America.”

The widely circulated sign “Darn good liar” carried a similar message: Bush is succeeding in fooling the majority of voters.

“We’re here today because we’re really happy that the Republicans have only two months left,” said filmmaker Michael Moore, in a dispirited presentation. Moore’s so-called documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* has been widely used to promote the Kerry campaign. “To borrow an idea from Congressman Rangel, I think we should bring back the draft,” Moore told the press. “But only for the sons of politicians and of owners of the Fortune 500 corporations,” he remarked, in one of his trademark attempts at being funny that fall flat for most people.

Jesse Jackson, the featured speaker, concluded the press conference. While criticizing the way the Bush administration invaded Iraq and calling for bringing back the troops, he demanded that Washington intervene in the Sudan, which he had just visited. “We have a moral obligation to use our strength,” he said, calling for a U.S. arms embargo against Sudan and military intervention to “disarm the Janjaweed,” a militia that has carried out bloody attacks on the civilian population in that country.

Jackson went on to criticize the Bush administration for not spending enough money on “homeland defense.”

“If Bush had given millionaires an \$83,000 tax cut instead of \$88,000, our ports could be secured from the threat of biological attack,” he said. He also said the Republican administration was not putting enough police on the streets.

## American nationalism

American nationalism was in full display at the action. Many protesters held U.S. flags or signs that said “I am a true patriot” or “Dissent is patriotic.” United for Peace and Justice sold T-shirts that read, “This is what a true patriot looks like.”

One contingent at the end of the march carried nearly 1,000 coffins draped in U.S. flags, to symbolize the number of soldiers who have been killed in Iraq since the spring of 2003.

“The officers in my unit let me know it was something they didn’t like,” said Bryan Crowe, a Marine who spent five months in Iraq, of the reaction to his anti-war views. Crowe, a member of a group called Iraq Veterans Against the War, which had a contingent of about a dozen at the march, said he got some heat from his superiors after he spoke at an antiwar rally and was interviewed by a reporter. “Nothing really happened to me like on paper. More an intimidation thing.... I got some phone calls. I was asked to explain myself and I told them I didn’t have to explain myself, it’s my First Amendment right.”

Crowe said it wasn’t accurate to say half the U.S. troops in Iraq suffer from low morale, a statement made by two speakers at the press conference. “I don’t think anyone’s happy to be there, or as many people support the war as the media makes it out,” Crowe said. “But even though I was against the war when I was sent there, I still had a job to do. Being miserable and not paying attention can cause you to lose your life, so I stayed on point.” Crowe, a registered Green, said he wasn’t sure electing Kerry will make a difference in Iraq.

Only one or two soldiers have deserted the U.S. military so far because of opposition to the Anglo-American assault on Iraq.

At several points, small groups of rightist counterdemonstrators lined side streets along the march route. At the intersection of 27th Street and 7th Avenue, the pro-Bush hecklers chanted “U.S.A!, U.S.A!” Protesters countered them by repeating the same chant, though more loudly, stealing the rightists’ thunder.

## ‘Anything to get Bush out’

“I just want to beat Bush,” said Anna Odem, a psychologist from Manhattan, in a comment reflecting the views most protesters who were interviewed expressed. “Anything just to get Bush out. He’s destroyed most of what we stand for as a country. It’s time to get Bush out.”

Many of the demonstrators were from the middle classes, like Odem. A good portion were students or other youth.

A number of signs peddled conspiracy theories blaming Bush and the “neoconservative cabal” around him for covering up the truth about the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. “Expose the 9-11 coverup” was a sign held by many demonstrators. A group held a large banner reading “The Bush regime engineered 9-11.” Protesters from that contingent passed out leaflets claiming that the Bush administration knew about the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and helped orchestrate them.

Low-level, personalized attacks on Bush, including the false assertion that he is “stupid,” were not uncommon, reflecting the coarsening discourse of bourgeois politics. “A village in Texas is missing its idiot; send him home,” said a placard, for example, held by a number of protesters.

Estimates of the march size varied. The free dailies *Metro* and *AM New York*, and an unofficial police count reported by the *Daily News*, put the figure at more than 120,000. Organizers said that about 400,000 took part. The *New York Times* said reports of half a million protesters were “at best, a rough estimate.”

The action was largely peaceful. Protesters marched slowly and patiently. While there was a heavy police presence around Madison Square Garden, site of the Republican convention, and along the demonstration route, relatively few arrests were made. According to the *Daily News*, cops arrested about 240 people that day, including 50 bikers who allegedly tried to crash the parade. Arrests were also made when a group called Black Bloc, self-described as anarchist, torched a papier-mâché dragon’s head mounted on a rickshaw in front of Madison Square Garden.

Many more people were arrested the next two days, after the Republican convention started. About 1,000 people were arrested August 31, most while trying to block traffic. About 200 supporters of the War Resisters League were rounded up and arrested that day for a march up a sidewalk toward Madison Square Garden, for which the pacifist group said it had obtained a permit. Cops also arrested about 150 people gathered on sidewalks near the convention site who refused to heed police orders to disperse. According to the *Washington Post*, this brought to 1,600 the total number of



Militant/Carlos Sánchez

**Part of crowd at August 29 “Dump Bush!” protest in New York City. Banners and placards with variations on the theme of ‘Bush lies’ were prominent throughout several days of actions targeting the Republican convention held in the city.**

those apprehended since August 26 during protest activities.

## Little enthusiasm for Kerry

A relatively small number of marchers wore buttons and T-shirts endorsing Kerry. The only pro-Kerry chant *Militant* reporters heard was “Bush is scary, vote Kerry.” Not much enthusiasm for Kerry was on display, especially among younger protesters, a number of whom told *Militant* reporters they dislike the Democratic nominee’s pro-war record and considered the action a peace rally.

“I don’t think it’s appropriate to wear John Kerry buttons to this rally since this is an antiwar march and Kerry is not opposed to the war,” said Gil Wasserman, for example, 17, a high school student from Brooklyn. Wasserman said, however, he felt Kerry is the only realistic alternative to Bush in the elections.

Santiago Santos, a maintenance worker in a building in Queens who is a member of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, was marching with a sign that said Bush, with an arrow pointed in one direction, and *verdad* (truth, in Spanish) with an arrow pointed in the other. “I hope Kerry will be better for the economy,” said Santos. “It’s a choice between a bad one and a halfway bad one. A little less bad.”

The demonstration was billed in part as a peace march. Organizers distributed a large number of signs held by demonstrators calling for Washington to bring the troops home from Iraq. But relatively few chants expressed opposition to the war in Iraq, although this was the view held by all protesters the *Militant* interviewed.

Partly because of this reality, the Democratic Party cannot claim many of the protesters as its own or be assured they will even go to the polls to cast a vote for Kerry. *Militant* reporters observed a number of activists with Democratic National Committee T-shirts trying to sign up volunteers to help the Kerry campaign at the end of the march and getting the cold shoulder from most protesters.

## Bourgeois ‘third’ party campaigns

Supporters of the “third-party” campaigns of the Greens and Ralph Nader/Peter Camejo also took part in the march. While presenting themselves as “independent” alternatives to the two-party system of American capitalism, the banners of these contingents and comments by participants made it clear these are pro-capitalist campaigns aimed at pressuring the Democratic

Party and attempting to nudge it a little to the left.

Green Party supporters marched with signs for their presidential candidates, David Cobb and Patricia LaMarche.

Cobb and LaMarche “believe very much that George Bush is an enormous threat to the United States,” said Lynn Serpe, a New Yorker who was marching with the Greens contingent. “So the Greens are offering an alternative to the two-party system.... But, in swing states we say to Green supporters: if you can’t vote Green, we understand, it’s a tough election year.”

Another contingent marched in support of the Nader/Camejo ticket behind a large banner that read “Impeach Bush/Cheney.” A few hundred people marching with the campus-based group International Socialist Organization also carried placards supporting the Nader/Camejo ticket.

“I was a petitioner in Maryland,” said Joe Schroeder, 20, a student at the Baltimore Community College who supports the Nader campaign. “We are 500 signatures short so I’m going through the list to find the valid ones. ‘It was tough,’ Schroeder said of the petitioning effort. He said that a Nader petitioner was attacked and three Republican supporters came out and defended him. “There are a lot of Democratic Party supporters in Baltimore.”

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party 2004 presidential ticket of Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president, marched behind a banner reading, “It’s not who you’re against; it’s what you’re for. Vote Socialist Workers in 2004!” Many teams of SWP campaigners worked the crowd.

“People take this campaign very seriously,” said Raúl, a worker at a meatpacking plant in San Francisco who was campaigning with the socialists at Union Square Park. “Some say it is utopian for Róger to run. ‘He’s Nicaraguan, not born in the United States,’ they say. But when I explain that the campaign is part of organizing a working-class movement, for a working-class alternative to the parties of capitalism that goes beyond the elections, many people began to understand and appreciate it.”

The socialists held a forum featuring SWP candidates the night before the August 29 march and an open house at their Garment District SWP campaign center, just a few blocks from the march route, after the demonstration. About two dozen people who first met the socialists at the protests took part in these campaign activities (see article on page 5).



# Too many old people?

The calls for Social Security “reform” issued by the Bush administration around the Republican convention, and echoed by the big-business press across the country, are part of the preparations by the U.S. rulers for deeper attacks on Social Security and other social gains of working people. The labor movement needs to oppose all these moves.

A chorus of capitalist politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, is warning that the Social Security system will become bankrupt in the coming years because of the growing numbers of older workers. Seventy-seven million “baby boomers” are approaching retirement by the end of the decade, and young workers will bear an undue burden caused by older generations, they argue.

The old myth of overpopulation, of too many babies, is being replaced by the new myth of “too many old people.”

In the name of “saving” Social Security, some in ruling-class circles, such as Federal Reserve chief Alan Greenspan, have proposed raising the retirement age. Others, such as President George Bush, play on workers’ insecurity about the future in proposing individual retirement accounts, which they claim would give people more control over their own retirement money. But such “savings” can evaporate during a sharp financial crisis.

Democratic presidential contender John Kerry, like Bush, disingenuously declares that he would not cut current Social Security benefits. But Kerry has not rejected the proposal—designed to pit younger against older workers—to cut benefits for those who will retire in the coming decades.

The renewed assault on Social Security builds on an earlier attack that the Clinton administration launched in 1996 with virtually no opposition: the elimination of “welfare as we know it.” Abolishing Aid to Families with Dependent Children was the biggest single success of the U.S. rulers in beginning to erode the federal social security system, a conquest won by working people through the struggles that built the industrial unions in the 1930s and substantially expanded through the mass civil rights movement of the 1960s. Shortly before the end of his term, Clinton bragged that 8 million people had been slashed from state welfare rolls. It was the first

time an entire category of working people was eliminated from such a social entitlement.

Clinton’s Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was passed during a period of economic recovery. With the expiration of the five-year welfare cutoff beginning in 2001, the first effects are now being felt, as millions exhaust their benefits. The majority of these workers have been pressed into near-minimum wage jobs with few if any health or pension benefits. With the next recession, the full impact of the lack of social protection will be felt among millions as unemployment rises and bosses push to cut wages and health insurance.

The capitalists view it as a “problem” that we are living longer. In the 1930s, life expectancy was below 65, so the government did not expect to have to pay more than a few years of Social Security benefits. Their hope is that after having squeezed as much labor out of us as possible for 50 or so years, we will die quickly and stop cutting into their profit margins.

The assault on the social wage is accompanied by a propaganda campaign to convince people that the conditions faced by the elderly are not a concern of younger or middle-aged workers. This is one of the various ways they try to tear up our class solidarity.

Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and other social benefits are simply a portion of the wealth that working people have created through their labor, and which workers have wrested from the bosses as a social right of all. These gains make it possible for workers to make it through a lifetime. They undercut the dog-eat-dog competition fostered by capitalism. The less such protection we have, the less confident we are and the more likely we will be to take a job for lower wages and worse conditions.

The labor movement must expose and campaign against the bipartisan attempt to end Social Security as we know it. It must also demand that, to protect working people against the ravages of the economic crisis, all social security, health care, unemployment, disability, welfare, and retirement payments be brought under a comprehensive, nationwide, government-guaranteed social security program for all.

# Charley’s differential impact

The contrast between the effects of Hurricane Charley on the livelihoods of working people in Havana province and Florida is stark. It shows that while hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes are natural phenomena, the resulting damage is not a natural disaster but a calamity that has to do with the prevailing social system.

Charley struck Havana, the largest city in Cuba, the same day it cut through a swath of Florida that included many rural areas. Four people died in Cuba, while 25 lost their lives in Florida.

The measures taken to prepare for the storm and to deal with the damage in Charley’s aftermath also show vastly different class priorities. The revolutionary government in Havana was unsparing in its efforts to save lives and quick in using all available resources to restore normalcy to the lives of working people after the storm. The measures by the imperialist government in Washington were penny-pinching and callous.

Supported by the mobilization of working people, the Cuban government organized to evacuate hundreds of thousands before Charley hit. Extra effort was made to ensure that people in the most vulnerable areas reached shelter in a timely manner. After the storm, trade unions, neighborhood committees, and other mass organizations mobilized hundreds of thousands of volunteers to clean up and repair the damage to homes, schools, and hospitals. The Union of Young Communists organized

house-to-house visits to ensure that every individual and family affected would not be cut off from necessities such as water and electricity.

In Florida, a state in the wealthiest imperialist country in the world, many of the two dozen victims were among the thousands living in trailer parks, people trying to get by on meager pensions, or agricultural workers, mostly immigrants. Charlotte County, one of the hardest hit in the state, had no hurricane shelters, road system inadequate for evacuation, and tens of thousands of homes were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Yet the Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided just 350 trailers so far to temporarily house about 120 families. Most of those who lost homes will have to rely for compensation on insurance companies that exact sky-high premiums. Undocumented workers, whose labor is exploited by agricultural and other bosses, have been discouraged from seeking government relief for fear of arrest and deportation.

What a contrast between Cuba’s concern for working people and reliance on the capacities of the toilers and human solidarity, and the U.S. rulers’ callous disregard for anything but their profits!

The Cuban people and their revolutionary leadership are able to set such an example—where the mightiest capitalist power in the world cannot—because of what a socialist revolution makes possible.

# CIA-trained murderers freed in Panama

Continued from Page 4

Cuban leaders.

Cuban and Venezuelan authorities have sought his extradition on charges of involvement in the 1976 mid-air bombing of a Cuban passenger plane over Barbados that killed 73 people. He was acquitted in a trial in Venezuela on those charges and was allowed to escape from a Venezuelan jail in 1985 while awaiting re-trial. Posada Carriles then turned up in El Salvador working with a group with tied to U.S. Marine Col. Oliver North, which supplied weapons to Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries fighting to overthrow the Sandinista government. He later bragged about his involvement in a string of bombings in Havana in 1997 that targeted hotels and other vacation facilities in Havana, including one that killed an Italian tourist and wounded more than a dozen others.

Jiménez served six years in a Mexican prison after being convicted of attempting to kidnap a Cuban diplomat in 1976. After escaping from prison Jiménez was allowed to reenter the United States. He was also indicted, although the charges were dismissed, for a 1976 bombing that blew

off the legs of Miami news reporter Emilio Milián.

In 1986 Remón was sentenced to 10 years in a U.S. prison after pleading guilty to attempting to murder a Cuban diplomat at the United Nations. He is also suspected of involvement in an attempted bombing of Cuba’s UN mission in 1979.

Novo was convicted in 1976 for involvement in the car-bombing of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C. He was acquitted on appeal. He was also arrested in 1964 for an attack on the UN headquarters with a bazooka during a speech by Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara.

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# Venezuela’s oil

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

A reader this week asks for clarification on who owns and profits from Venezuela’s oil wells. We appreciate the question, which gives the *Militant* an opportunity to provide some additional facts and clarify points that may not have been presented transparently in previous articles.

Oil was first discovered in Venezuela in the state of Táchira in 1878. The government gave the first exploration contract to a large local landowner, followed by similar concessions to other Venezuelan capitalists and landlords. As new oil deposits were discovered in subsequent decades, foreign investments also grew. By 1930, more than 100 foreign companies—including Chevron, Mobil, Amoco, and Shell—were doing business there in oil exploration and production.

Venezuela is a semicolonial country, dominated by Washington and other imperialist powers. So it’s no wonder that foreign investment in oil, especially from the United States, loomed large from the beginning, fattening the coffers of the seven sisters—the oil monopolies that have dominated world petroleum resources and markets for decades—and the imperialist powers they are based

## REPLY TO A READER

in. Venezuelan capitalists, however, have always been involved in investing and profiting from the country’s number one natural resource. That remained true after the oil industry became state-owned.

The government of Venezuela nationalized oil in 1975. When the businesses owned by foreign companies and Venezuelan capitalistists became state property, however, the new company—Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)—left the operations in the hands of the same bosses. Steps to bring the company more firmly under state control were not taken prior to 2001, when the government headed by President Hugo Chávez enacted a new hydrocarbons law. Venezuelan and foreign capitalists continue to profit from oil exploration and distribution of petroleum products today, however, because the capitalist class maintains control of the means of production under the new administration.

Until the beginning of 2003, when working people defeated a bosses’ “strike” aimed at overthrowing the elected government and opened the way for a completely new management at PDVSA, the company’s president had a salary 10 times that of the minister of energy, who was supposed to be his superior. According to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the salary and benefit packages of the company’s top 20 executives ranged from \$16,000 to \$51,000 per month in 2002. In addition, many managers had access to PDVSA-provided chalets in the Andes. Top administrators enjoyed luxurious company-owned residences near their offices.

These bosses made sure that PDVSA was organized from the wellhead to the gas pump to serve the local bourgeoisie and its U.S. allies, rather than the interests of working people in Venezuela. Under capitalism local and international finance capital continues to usurp the profits from state-owned companies, like PDVSA.

Here are a few examples of how this has worked and continues to work today in Venezuela.

In the early 1990s, prior to Chávez’s election, the Venezuelan government adopted a policy known as “Petroleum Opening” to encourage foreign investment. Between 1992 and 1993, Caracas awarded 14 such contracts. Under this policy, the capitalists involved got 20-year exploration contracts that mandated certain minimum investment levels but guaranteed a fat percentage to these businessmen from every barrel of oil their operations extracted. So while PDVSA continued to own the oil wells, a huge percentage of the profits went to these imperialist-owned monopolies.

In 1996, Venezuela’s Congress authorized profit-sharing agreements under which private firms, local and foreign, had the right to own the majority stake in any new gas or oil deposits they developed. The government also lowered the royalties these investors had to pay to the state for such contracts.

In addition, while refining and most gasoline distribution in Venezuela is done by PDVSA and its subsidiaries, most natural gas marketing and the production and distribution of some other petroleum derivatives have remained in private hands.

Three years after the Chávez administration took office, it passed a new hydrocarbons law that increased the royalties investors have to pay from 16 percent to 30 percent for exploration contracts and mandated that PDVSA hold a majority stake in any new exploration project. This measure angered most of the capitalists in Venezuela and their imperialist allies. But as it became clear prior to and after the recent defeat of the presidential recall referendum, international capital in oil, and a minority of Venezuelan capitalists, act on the hope they can continue to do business with the Chávez administration and profit from their operations.

Only if working people take political power, establish a workers and farmers government, and end imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation once and for all, can this situation change and all the natural wealth of the country be put to use to solve the needs of the vast majority.



# Cubans mobilize to confront impact of Hurricane Charley

BY MATILDE ZIMMERMANN

HAVANA—Hurricane Charley hit this city of 2 million with terrible force in the early hours of August 13. “In all my 37 years, I’ve never experienced anything like it,” Lupe Guerra told the *Militant*. Guerra, who works in the national headquarters of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), described as “marvelous” the participation in voluntary work brigades to repair her Havana neighborhood. “People have really turned out,” she said. “And the thing that impresses me most is the people who weren’t even affected, who keep coming to help those of us who suffered damage.”

Charley was the first hurricane since 1915 to hit Havana directly. Winds that gusted to nearly 160 miles per hour tore trees up by their roots and destroyed or damaged houses, schools, and factories. At the main electrical plant in Mariel, west of the capital, 26 huge towers were blown down, cutting off power to the city of Havana and the entire island west of the capital.

For the 24 hours before the hurricane, residents of Havana and the rural areas around the city organized themselves through their unions, neighborhood organizations, and schools to evacuate people from low-lying areas and structurally weak buildings. More than 215,000 people and 150,000 animals were moved to safer ground and to shelters. Emergency measures were enacted to guarantee food and water supplies. In spite of all the precautions, four people were killed by collapsing buildings or drowning. This is more than the total number of hurricane fatalities in Cuba during the previous two years.

The extent of Hurricane Charley’s destruction became known in the course of the week that followed, as working people in Havana province mobilized to clean up the streets and repair buildings. More than 70,000 houses were partially or totally destroyed and thousands of acres of crops lost. Nearly 800 schools, over 300 health centers, and more than 120 cultural and sports facilities were damaged. Havana has always been a very green city, especially the western neighborhoods that bore the brunt of this hurricane.

An estimated 8,000 trees were downed by Charley, some of them a century old. The Forestry Service and city government have promised to plant one new tree for every one lost, but this will take time. In the meantime, they are trying to salvage as much of the wood as possible for lumber, and thousands of bushes and shrubs have already been planted.

Damage to the national electricity grid cut off power to the entire western agricultural province of Pinar del Rio for 11 days. Pinar del Rio is famous for tobacco, and 50 percent of the tobacco-curing buildings were demolished. Hardest-hit in terms of agricultural production was the poultry industry; the region affected by the hurricane supplies all Havana’s eggs, a major source of protein in the diet. The mango season is basically over, several weeks ahead of schedule, because virtually all the remaining fruit on the trees was lost. Charley was an unusually dry hurricane, bringing very little relief from the drought Cuba has been suffering, and no rain at all to the most drought-stricken eastern provinces.

Economic losses to Cuba from Charley totaled more than US\$1 billion. The U.S. government offered to donate \$50,000 to hurricane victims, but only to “independent”

organizations. The Cuban government refused this pittance. “‘Independent’ of what?” said one young woman, shown on TV news in front of the ruins of her house. “‘Independent’ of our mobilizations of solidarity?”

The response of the population to the hurricane was immediate and well organized. Voluntary brigades of neighborhood residents worked with soldiers and others from dawn of August 13 to clear the streets of fallen branches or whole trees and of other debris. With the assistance of electrical engineers and technicians who came in from other parts of the country, they worked to restore power and repair the thousands of fallen electrical cables and wires.

Members of the Union of Young Communists and thousands of social workers went house to house, checking on people and trying to connect them with food and drinking water. Industrial workers were organized by the Cuban workers federation to repair their own plants, and, if these were intact, to work on other production facilities.

The head of the Committee for Defense of the Revolution in the neighborhood where I stay, Antonio “Bolo” Benítez, 65, told me August 15 he had just returned from working all day in one of the hardest-hit places, a coastal village west of the city. Of the 300 houses there, only 10 were left standing, he said. Waves of sea water had penetrated 1 kilometer inland, leaving dead fish and shattered buildings behind. But no lives were lost there.

The priority that government and Communist Party leaders have emphasized is doing whatever it takes to restore Havana to normalcy in the shortest time possible. This is being accomplished through a combination of organized voluntary work and the government’s mobilization of all the material resources available. Hundreds of trucks are being used almost around the clock to pick up debris and to deliver building ma-



Reuters/Claudia Daut

**Havana residents fill up plastic containers with water distributed from tanker trucks August 16, three days after Hurricane Charley roared through the area.**

terials to the communities and individuals who are rebuilding. The government has promised that the start of the school year in September will not be delayed or affected. Reporters from *Juventud Rebelde*, the newspaper of the UJC, visited one of the damaged schools and talked to some children who were helping parents and teachers clean up the yard. The youngsters, aged 8 to 10, told the reporters their own school was fine. But they had heard from friends that this one was in bad shape and they came to help out.

There was a call for an all-out mobilization of voluntary labor for the weekend of August 21–22, one week after the hurricane. Saturday was for repairs to workplaces, organized primarily by the unions and youth organizations, and Sunday was for neighborhood projects, organized block by block by the Committees for Defense of the Revolution. As I walked around my neighborhood between 7 and 8 o’clock Sunday morning, there were groups of a dozen people or so working on each block. Working with machetes, rakes, and brooms, they were cutting the grass, piling up branches and other debris, spreading out the water in puddles

so that it evaporated and didn’t become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and replanting bushes and small trees. According to the press, over 170,000 Havana residents participated in the weekend mobilizations. Another day of voluntary work was organized August 28 to finish the cleanup.

After events like this, everyone has stories to tell, and many have suffered and continue to suffer hardship. But the mood is one of confidence and optimism, and Havana seems to be returning to normal in many ways. There are still frequent blackouts, however, which last from a few minutes to several hours, and about half the traffic lights in the city are not working.

There are many complaints about the blackouts, especially during the Olympics, which were being broadcast here on two channels. When the Cuban baseball team was playing against Australia for the gold medal, the Cuban TV announcer made a special appeal to those watching in Havana to turn off any unnecessary electrical appliances. It must have worked. The power stayed on long enough for everyone to see the home team win.

## Charley hits Florida, devastating workers’ lives

BY KARL BUTTS  
AND RACHELE FRUIT

TAMPA, Florida—Working people, especially farm workers, farmers, and retirees, were hit hard by Hurricane Charley and its aftermath, which hit this state August 13. The hurricane cut a 200-mile-long by 40-mile-wide path of destruction, killing 25 people, knocking out power to 2 million people, and causing property damage possibly exceeding \$15 billion. The storm destroyed or made uninhabitable some 31,000 homes, according to a Red Cross survey. The government declared 25 of Florida’s 67 counties disaster zones.

According to an article in the *Tampa Tribune*, multiple man-made vulnerabilities in Charlotte County made it, “a disaster waiting to happen.” The county has no hurricane shelters, all utility lines are above ground, and the road system is inadequate for evacuation.

Charlotte County, where one-third of the 153,000 residents are 65 or older, sustained extensive damage. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reported that 80 percent of the county’s buildings were damaged. “Known for its affordable housing stock,” the *Tribune* said, virtually all of the county’s 8,100 mobile homes were destroyed or damaged. All three hospitals in the county were also damaged,

two of them badly.

Hurricane Charley affected the livelihood of tens of thousands of workers and farmers. An official at the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation estimated 120,000 jobs lost as a result of the storm. Thousands of farm workers face uncertain futures within impacted agricultural areas. Insurance companies claiming high losses charge exorbitant premiums in the state and have gotten the legislature to pass measures shifting losses onto the backs of homeowners. While most homeowners are required to buy insurance in order to receive loans for their homes, many of those who owned

mobile homes in some of the worst-hit areas paid cash for their homes to avoid paying the insurance premiums, or took only minimal insurance coverage, and are now facing a devastating loss.

Aid to the workers and farmers in the region devastated by the storm has been slow in coming. Nine days after losing their homes, only about 20 families had been settled in FEMA trailers of the 20,000 that had qualified for temporary housing assistance. A local television news channel reported that one woman who called FEMA for assistance was asked first if she was “here legally” before being provided aid.

## LETTERS

### Who profits from Venezuela oil?

“Venezuela: Mass Rally Says ‘No’ to Pro-imperialist Recall” in issue no. 31 of the *Militant*, dated Aug. 31, 2004, was an excellent article giving details of the issues involved in the class conflicts going on in Venezuela.

However, there is one item that is not clear to me. In the article it says: “One of the fruits of the workers’ victory in that class confrontation [December 2002/January 2003] was a completely new management for PDVSA, the state-owned oil company.” Then it goes on to say: “Leading up to the lockout, the Chávez administration had angered most of Venezuela’s wealthy ruling families and their allies in Washington by doubling the royalties that investors have to pay for oil exploration contracts and taking other measures to strengthen state control of the country’s natural resources.”

These last two statements are somehow ambiguous and contradictory. If the oil industry is state owned, then why does the private sector enjoy the results of exploration? Does this mean that the government does not own oil wells? Or perhaps “oil company” includes only the production

facilities and not the “oil wells.”

Please clarify.  
*A reader in Iran*

### Imports and exports

Imports deprive American companies and their employees of jobs. Exports provide American companies and their employees with jobs. When exports are greater than imports, that really helps create a healthy economy.

The search for foreign markets leads to war! In order to abolish war we must abolish capitalism!

Under the planned economy of socialism imports do not need to be less than exports.

*Albert B. Thurston  
Yonkers, New York*

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.**

**Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEW YORK Manhattan

**The Meaning of the Republican National Convention and Protests Surrounding It** Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, editor of the *Militant*. Fri., Sept. 3. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 307 W 36th St., 10th Floor (use north elevators). Suggested donation: \$5 for dinner, \$5 for program. Tel: (212) 629-6649.

### AUSTRALIA Sydney

**Fahrenheit 9/11: Michael Moore’s pro-imperialist show aimed at dumping Bush for Kerry** Speaker: Linda Harris, spokesperson for the Communist League election campaign. Sat., Sept. 11, 7 p.m. 3/281-7 Beamish St., Campsie (upstairs in arcade near Evaline St.) Suggested donation: \$4/\$2. Tel: (02) 9718 9698.



# New Zealand: Jewish graves attacked

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Striking under cover of darkness, rightist vandals smashed or damaged 113 Jewish grave-stones and burned a Jewish prayer chapel to the ground at a cemetery in Makara, Wellington, on August 5.

The attack “was believed to be the worst anti-Semitic desecration at a cemetery in New Zealand” noted the Associated Press on August 6. It was the second such attack within a month. Three weeks earlier 16 historic Jewish graves in the Bolton Street cemetery in Wellington had been targeted. At both sites the vandals gouged swastikas into the ground.

The outrage that greeted the attacks coincided with ongoing controversy over two other issues. One was a rift between the New Zealand and Israeli governments following the jailing here of two alleged agents of the Israeli secret police for attempting to fraudulently obtain New Zealand passports. The other was the government’s announcement that it will ban a planned visit in September by David Irving, an anti-Semitic agitator based in Britain.

No one has claimed responsibility for either act of desecration. One week after the second attack, the *New Zealand Herald* announced that police had “refused to comment on a report that they have arrested a Wanganui skinhead and National Front member” in connection with both the August 5 desecration and with “race-related attacks alleged by a Wellington group of Somalis in June.” Wanganui is a city about 120 miles from Wellington. The jailed man denied any involvement in the cemetery attack.

A leader of the National Front (NF) described the man as “an NF member, not of very high standing at the moment.”

Front leaders have raised the profile of the group recently with public statements and actions that have included a picket in June outside the Chinese embassy in Wellington opposing plans for a “free trade” agreement between the governments of New Zealand and China. Attempting to dress up their chauvinism in populist demagoguery, the ultrarightists held signs calling for “Jobs for New Zealand workers.”

The National Front has a small number of cadre in several cities. Larger rightist groups include the New Zealand First party, which has 13 members of parliament (MPs), Christian Heritage, and Destiny New Zealand.

Most capitalist media and politicians here have portrayed the attacks as the work of a “lunatic fringe,” as the headline of an editorial in the August 10 *New Zealand Herald* put it. The same day parliament passed a resolution unanimously condemning the attacks and voted to send it to Tel Aviv. Michael Cullen, the finance minister and acting government leader during a trip overseas by Prime Minister Helen Clark, said he hoped that the vandalism was “the work of an isolated crank or cranks.” He described anti-Semitism as “evil and irrational, though sadly deep-seated in European culture.”



Rightists damaged Jewish gravestones (above) August 5 in Makara, Wellington, New Zealand. They burned down a Jewish prayer chapel (inset) during the same attack.

Gerald Brownlee, the deputy leader of the opposition conservative National Party, dubbed the attacks “idiotic acts of hate” and complained that they had “badly damaged New Zealand’s reputation overseas.”

New Zealand First leader Winston Peters joined the parliamentary chorus of condemnation, saying that the Jewish people “are entitled to be respected.” One Jewish student from the United States living in Wellington told radio reporters that Peters’s rightist demagoguery had contributed to the climate that made such attacks possible.

The Palestine Human Rights Campaign in Wellington issued a statement deploring the “reported desecration of Jewish graves” and condemning “all forms of racism.” The Wellington City Council is footing the bill for rebuilding the prayer chapel and the gravesites at Makara.

On August 15, some 120 opponents of the anti-Semitic attacks attended a public meeting in Wellington to condemn the desecrations and plan an anti-racist protest in response to a National Front march scheduled for October 23. National Front supporters picketed the meeting, carrying “Free Palestine” placards in an attempt to dress up the group’s anti-Semitism in the garb of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Following the earlier attack at the Bolton Street cemetery, more than 200 people had gathered at the site to express their outrage, reported Wellington’s

*Dominion Post*. Rabbi Anthony Lipman and David Schwartz addressed the crowd.

Referring to the revelations about the activities of Tel Aviv’s alleged agents, Lipman told reporters that “he made no connection between the Israeli men sentenced in Auckland yesterday and the smashing of the headstones,” the *Post* said.

Schwartz, who is both the president of the New Zealand Jewish Council and the honorary consul of the Israeli government, took a different tack, telling National Radio that he had “no doubt the action was connected to the passport case.”

“I think there is a direct connection” between the government’s “very strong expressions against Israel and people here feeling that they can take it out on Jews,” Schwartz stated. “It seems to me that it’s Israel bashing one day, Jew bashing the next day.”

Prime Minister Helen Clark denied that the diplomatic rift between her government and Tel Aviv was driven by anti-Semitism. According to the July 29 *Herald*, the inter-government dispute spilled into the public arena after officials initially conducted behind-the-scenes negotiations following the apprehension in March of Eli Cara and Uriel Kelman, who were “caught trying to obtain a passport in the name of a disabled New Zealander.” The Auckland daily claimed that the talks came to an abrupt end “once the two alleged Mossad agents were charged with criminal actions and the scandal was

exposed by the *Herald*.”

Both men were sentenced to six months in jail August 7, after pleading guilty to charges of passport fraud. Subsequently Clark announced the suspension of high-level contacts between the two governments. “The New Zealand government views the act carried out by the Israeli intelligence agents as not only utterly unacceptable but also a breach of New Zealand sovereignty and international law,” she said.

The anti-Semite David Irving, who styles himself an historian of World War II, depicted the New Zealand government’s action as a blow for his cause. “Prime Minister Helen Clark seems to have balls,” he said approvingly. After first suggesting that “disordered” members of the Jewish community could be responsible for the attacks on the graves, Irving claimed “it could have been driven by the Israeli spy agency, Mossad,” the *Herald* said August 11.

Irving has been invited to speak in September at a meeting organized by the National Press Club, a private association. “I received a very nice invitation from New Zealanders to come and speak and I will honor that invitation,” he said. Officials of the Immigration Service said that Irving would be excluded from entering the country because he had previously been deported from Canada.

Schwartz congratulated the government for its action in banning the rightist speaker.

National Press Club president Peter Isaac, however, said, “We want to hear this man directly, find out about him and how he holds those views.” Green Party member of parliament Keith Locke also protested the banning, saying that it “sets a bad precedent for free speech in this country.”

Felicity Coggan, the Communist League candidate in the September elections for mayor of Auckland, said in a statement August 16 that “the government’s ban on Irving’s visit fosters illusions that capitalist regimes can be relied on to block the development of rightist figures and movements. In reality, capitalism is the source of scapegoating of Jews and of the reactionary movements that promote Jew hatred.”

Irving “has nothing to say of interest to working people,” Coggan said. “Instead of looking to the government to ban him, we should protest every time he and his like speak in public and expose their lies—just as the labor movement should mobilize to condemn the desecration of the Jewish graves in Wellington, and demand that those responsible be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. We should do the same with each and every act of Jew hatred, which is deadly poison for the working class.”

## UK bosses target pensions, retirement age

BY CELIA PUGH

LONDON—UK rail workers in the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) pushed back an attempt by their employer, Network Rail, to close its final salary pension scheme to new starters. The company backed down in face of a threat for a one-day national strike planned for June 29 to coincide with a one-day RMT strike on the London Underground. Network Rail agreed to make final salary pensions available for new recruits after five years employment.

The takeback demands of the rail bosses are part of a broader offensive by the employers and their government against workers’ pensions across the United Kingdom.

Final salary pensions—or pensions equivalent to workers’ wages at the end of their employment—have been a target of bosses here the last couple of years. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reports that in this period 41 percent of firms have switched from final salary pensions to what’s called “money purchase schemes.” Under these schemes workers’ pensions are dependant on how the funds were invested, how much the

worker and their employer agreed to pay into the scheme, and the interest rates at the time of retirement.

Employers have convinced workers to opt for these schemes in part because of the paltry nature of the state pension. Currently available to workers retiring at 65, the level of state pension for individuals is £79.60 per week and £127.25 for couples (£1=\$1.50).

This comes out to an average annual pension of £4,081 (\$6,120)—rising to £5,438 (\$8,157) for those who are eligible for an earnings-related bonus.

Some workers don’t even get that much. They become eligible to receive full state pension only if they have paid into the compulsory government national insurance scheme for most of their working lives. Women who have taken time out of work get little or no state pension. On average, women’s retirement income from all sources is 53 percent of men’s.

Moreover, the National Pensioners Convention reports that the government plans to reduce state pension funds by a further 20 percent by the year 2050.

In the 1990s the government offered

incentives in the form of special rebates to workers to push them to opt out of the state pension and invest in pension plans pegged to investment schemes. An estimated 15 million workers had “contracted out” by 2001. Today the total amounts to 62 per cent of out of the workforce. Many are discovering that they will receive a pension even lower than the guaranteed state plan.

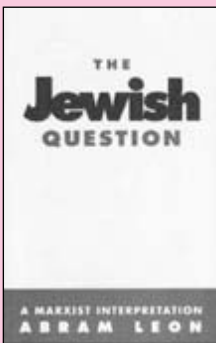
The CBI is now pushing for a compulsory retirement age of 70 to reduce pension payouts still further. Government ministers claim that workers will still be eligible for retirement at 65 and that raising the retirement age will help to combat “age discrimination.” According to statistics from the Trades Union Congress, if the retirement age is extended to 70, only one in five people, and nearly one third of the male population, will have died before they are eligible for retirement.

Behind the government and employer attack on pensions is the creeping crisis of British capitalism. The Labour government has no intention of paying a living state pension and private companies cry poverty to justify cuts in retirement benefits.

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